Intersection

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/15819636.

Rating:
Teen And Up Audiences

Archive Warning:
Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Category:
Multi

Fandom:
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Relationship:
Midoriya Izuku/Hatsume Mei/Yaoyorozu Momo/ Shinsou Hitoshi

Characters:
Midoriya Izuku, Hatsume Mei, Yaoyorozu Momo, Shinsou Hitoshi, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Iida Tenya, Uraraka Ochako, Todoroki Shouto, Nedzu (My Hero Academia), Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Monoma Neito, Shouji Mezou, Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Class 1-B (My Hero Academia)

Additional Tags:
au meets canon, hero class civil warfare, fic of a fic, BAMF Midoriya Izuku, Villain(ish) Midoriya Izuku, Polyamory, fake relationships, Manga Spoilers, THIS IS NOT ACTUALLY CANON IN THE HCCW UNIVERSE, Crack Treated Seriously, Angst, I didnt mean to make it this angsty but it happened

Language:
English

Series:
Part 3 of Hero Class Villain AU

Collections:
Tales of Class 1-A, Real Good Shit, MHA Civil War Fics, Completed stories I've read, Midoriya Izuku Is Terrifying, Got 99 problems but these ain't one, Creative Chaos Discord Recs, DerangedDeceiver's Favorite Fics, Typsy's Dragon Hoard, completed and read, bnha

dekuism, the holy grail of fanfiction, .Thoth's Luxury Library., Let's Play a Game, Rhynes MHA favs, ♥ All-Time Favorites ♥, My Favourite BNHA Longfics, BnHA FFS, Fav MHA fics, Titanmaster_117's Favourite Rare Pairs, 10/10 would read again xeno

Stats:

Published: 2018-08-28 Completed: 2020-05-06 Words: 113,227 Chapters: 28/28

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by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW, RogueDruid (Icarius51)

Summary

Midoriya “Kingpin” Izuku knew he always seemed to get stuck in the weirdest situations. But, getting stuck in an alternate timeline with the entire First Year Hero Class, where the Hero Class Civil Warfare never happened? That was the most outlandish thing that had happened to him ever.

And what was this about fighting their other selves?

(Crossover between the fic Hero Class Civil Warfare and canon. You have to read HCCW first)

Notes

This is entirely self-indulgent. Any idea for interactions you have is welcome.

- Inspired by Hero Class Civil Warfare by RogueDruid (Icarius51)

First Contact

Chapter Notes

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

When Iida Tenya had heard UA's intruder alarm for the second time in his life, he expected a villain assault, or the press again, or a misfire or a diversion for something else, but he hadn't expected this.

The group of people huddled around in UA's green plains looked exactly like the people around him. He could see All Might's distinctive form standing out among the crowd, Present Mic's voluminous hairstyle peeking out from the back, and, after a few seconds, he saw himself in a fighting stance, giving orders with chopping motions.

As he was instructed to go to his homeroom, he saw principal Nedzu walk up to the confused mass of people and begin a conversation.

'Things never stop happening around here, don't they?', he thought as he ushered his classmates with Yaoyorozu's help. '"Plus Ultra" indeed'.

Aizawa Shota stood in the normally bright Principal's Office, now sunk in shadows. The metal shutters had fallen in response to the alarm and nobody had risen them after, mostly since the threat hadn't passed.

The two Nedzu's (and if that wasn't ominous, Shota didn't know what was.) smiled at each other from opposites sides of the desk. Shota's own counterpart slumped in a chair, his eye-bags a few shades darker than his own.

"This is a very peculiar circumstance!" began Nedzu, the one from his own UA, cheerfully.

"Indeed," the other one responded, swirling his cup of tea. "It was certainly strange to find a Timeline Quirk, much less for it to be capable of transporting so many people at once. Then again, this year

has the propensity for getting into very interesting situations," he said, then took a sip from his tea.

Shota –not him the other one– snorted inelegantly and a fond smile played on his lips. Shota was inordinately attached to his class, that he knew annoyingly well, but he didn't show it. He had absolutely no idea why the hell his double did, and the amount of unanswered questions he had edged him closer to a violent headache.

"He's telling the truth," said Detective Naomasa through the telephone call. It was very convenient his Quirk worked through speakers.

"Well, if that's the case, we need to find out what's different!" Nedzu, his Nedzu– That was going to be annoying. Enough with that. Given names for those of his timeline, last names for the people from the other timeline, at least until a better method is found.

Both Nedzu and Nezu climb up the table and start talking inhumanly fast-paced, so fast it almost sounds like chitters or squeaks. That is something Shota never wants to hear ever again.

He moves to unfold his emergency sleeping bag and catches the stare of his counterpart. He pauses, both staring into each other's eyes, not unlike the staring matches his cats have with each other.

"YOOOOO SHOTA!" screams Hizashi, making both of their heads swivel to him. He doesn't even blink at the double-stare and continues forward to sling an arm around Shota's shoulders. "There's two of you now!"

"I noticed," he grumbles back, but he curls himself a little toward Hizashi's warmth. He can feel himself relax little by little, and Yamada goes to curl up with Aizawa too. 'At least that hasn't changed between timelines' is his last thought before he starts dozing.

…

"May I have your attention!" calls Nezu after an unfairly short time, the murmur of conversation that hadn't been there before stopping abruptly. Shota doesn't move or open his eyes, but his training refuses to let him go back to sleep. The Principal seems to know this because he continues regardless of his state.

"We have found the divergence!" he says before pulling up a few records up on screen. "Our curriculum included an activity called "Hero Class Civil War" in the months between the internships and

final exams, but it was scrapped after a few iterations to leave more time for the students to prepare for the exams. I believe it was around your time, All Might?"

"Yes it was!" he announces, obviously trying to imitate how his voice boomed before losing his Quirk. He more or less manages it, but not without coughing noisily and spitting blood. "I remember Todo– Endeavor was very disappointed he could not fight in his third year!"

Shota expects some inane commentary over this, and he gets it from the people in his timeline, but those from the other timeline remain suspiciously silent.

"Oh," says Vlad King. Kan doesn't elaborate what he meant by that. No one from the other timeline says anything back.

Shota prizes his instincts, he has spent most of his life listening to them, like every logical Pro Hero should. Right now, they are pointing out Yagi's slight pallor, and Nedzu's a-little-too-wide smile.

He sees Aizawa's face flash through a thousand different emotions. Pride, doubt, disappointment, nervousness…

Just what the hell happened?

Calm Before the Storm

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Summary

Why, when, how, and a thrown gauntlet.

Chapter Notes

What am I getting myself into?

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Izuku will admit this is not where he thought he would spend today, but then there were worse places he could be in.

The room was spacious and well-lit, with a few tables here and there. He also knew it was probably reinforced to hell and back and guarded by Pro Heroes on the other side. Still, they had given them all cookies and drinks, so it wasn't that bad.

"It's so cool! They're us, we're them and who knows what's different!" Uraraka enthuses, bouncing in her seat. "Anything could happen!" She pumps up her hand, accidentally aiming it towards Todoroki, who's sitting beside her. He makes an attempt at dodging and only partly succeeds. Uraraka starts apologizing profusely.

From his right, Momo giggles, covering her mouth with her hand. Izuku knows that's the "proper" way to laugh, but he can't help but wish she wouldn't hide her face. Her smile is one of the most beautiful things he's ever seen and it doesn't seem fair to the world to keep it hidden.

"True," says Momo. "Alternate timelines could make anything possible. However, we can start sorting through a few alternatives."

"What do you mean?" says Todoroki in a perfect deadpan, a slight crease in his eyebrows the only mark of his confusion.

"Well, we know UA exists in this timeline and it looks the same as far as we know. Principal Nedzu is still the Principal, Aizawa-sensei is still tired and so on. It's safe to assume we can discard a few possibilities

from that."

"Correct! We also know All Might-sensei exists!" exclaims Iida, waving a cookie around.

Izuku is about to point out that the evacuation looked a lot more organized than before, until Hitoshi stirs and grumbles.

"Good morning!" cheers Izuku. The purple-haired boy sits straighter and rubs his eyes.

"What time is it?" yawns out Hitoshi, blindly groping for a cookie. Izuku puts one in his hand and he nods. He takes a bite and gets cookie crumbs all over his face. Izuku itches to clean them up.

"3:30 pm!" calls out Iida, and Hitoshi winces, glaring at the noise. Iida apologizes at the exact same volume.

Before an argument can break out, the door opens and the teachers that had gone away to talk as ambassadors come in. None of them look particularly worried, so Izuku guesses things had gone over well.

"Dear students!" begins Nedzu from where he's standing on Aizawa-sensei's shoulder. "I bring good news! The first is the fact that this intersection of realities is not permanent! We got in contact with the person with the Timeline Quirk. They informed us of how after two weeks, give or take, all of us will go back to the place where we were. They apologize profusely on behalf of their alternate self for causing so much trouble. since those two weeks will also have gone by in our timeline by the time we get back there."

Relieved cheers rise up from the crowd and Izuku is right there with them. Iida doesn't look so happy though. He raises his hand and stands up.

"Nedzu-san, are you saying we will lose two weeks of education? It is unbecoming and highly irresponsible for an institution as prestigious as UA to do such a thing!" Iida exclaims, posture ram-rod straight.

"Thank you for your concern, Iida-san!" responds Nedzu. Iida bows in response. "We talked with the UA staff and administration and we have managed to create a schedule for these two weeks! The morning classes will be held in a few spare classrooms, just like usual! Lunch will be set up outside on the grass field behind the school. Heroic Studies, however, will be taken in concert with your counterparts!"

‘That’s such a good idea!’ thinks Izuku. ‘Being able to train with your counterpart offers you an outsider view of your skills and Quirks! It would be ten times easier to catch your own mistakes and know how to fix them. And! If you know something your counterpart doesn’t or viceversa, they could teach that. And since they’re you they’d be an incredibly efficient teacher. Nobody knows you like yourself after all and–’

“Thank you for the compliments, Midoriya-kun!”

Izuku squeaks and turns toward the Principal, who had been listening to his unintentional muttering all along. Izuku’s face heats up with embarrassment and starts rubbing the back of his neck. The whole table laughs, even Todoroki, though his laugh is more like a few soft puffs of air while quirking up his lips.

“Yo, what about me!”

Izuku jumps at the suddenness of the shout. He then gets used by Mei as an armrest. He sees Aizawa-sensei staring at him, his grimace a little tighter than usual. He saw himself jump…. He’s getting nothing but situational awareness exercises from now on, isn’t he?

“Don’t worry, Hatsume-san! You have been given access to the Support Labs to use at your leisure. Though if you want to work on things with your counterpart you will need to be under supervision of both Power Loaders.”

“Whoohooo! Thank you so much Nedzu!”

Iida cringes at the lack of honorific but he doesn't say anything. If he drew attention to himself now, she would use him as a guinea pig the next time he’s close to her lab. Izuku doesn’t comment on it for his sake.

“It was the right choice to do one last revision before you guys left!” says Mei, gently tugging a strand of his, Momo’s and Hitoshi’s hair, which is Mei-speak for “I love you”. ´That way I can say two things at once and not break my train of thought! Everybody wins!’ she had said the first time she did that. (Though they had to remind her to clean her hands before doing it almost every single time.)

“How so?” asked Momo, moving over so she could make more space for her. It made the bench they were sitting on a bit cramped, but none of them minded.

“I wouldn’t have been with you guys, first, and second–” she got a dreamy expression on her face, dramatically draping herself over Momo. “–Imagine how many babies I’ll be able to create with my other self!”

She continued fantasizing, unaware of the multiple expressions of horror on the table. Izuku couldn't wait to see what she came up with!

“One last thing!” called Nedzu. Izuku noticed how the teachers looked confused, so this was probably going to be news to them as well.

“The difference between this timeline an ours is the fact that the Class Civil War got canceled long ago!”

...Izuku could more or less picture who he’d be if he hadn’t become the Kingpin. He wouldn’t have been as confident of himself or of his plans. He wouldn’t have had any reason to interact with 1-B and make friends with them. He would definitely not be dating the three people around him. He hadn’t stopped to think how much that one exercise changed his life, and he’s very glad it happened.

“In light of this, my counterpart agreed to the possibility of conducting one such event! But! We are here, in this timeline, with these people. What could be more Plus Ultra than going up against yourself?”

“No way,” said Uraraka, staring dumbfounded at the Principal. Her mouth was halfway open, hanging loose. Nobody Izuku could see, not even Izuku himself, was faring much better.

“UA vs UA! A battle for the ages!” Nedzu announced, delighting himself on the reactions he was creating. “Of course, no specifics have been agreed upon yet.” he said apologetically.

From the corner of his eye he saw Vlad King-sensei open and close his mouth multiple times, looking remarkably like a very toothy fish, before giving up and distressingly running a hand through his hair.

“Though there is one thing we agreed upon!” Every shred of attention was aimed towards Nedzu, everyone strung even tighter at the news.

“It is only fair for the more Civil War-experienced UA to play the more difficult role of the villains, after all!”

Izuku could feel dozens of eyes on him, looking, waiting for any kind of reaction.

So, he gave the only one that made sense.

He smiled.

Divided

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Summary

> All things have a beginning. This one is a bit more rocky than planned.

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Nedzu sipped tea in his office, checking and rechecking the schedule changes and locations to accommodate the UA counterparts in his school.

He glanced at the clock and calculated that his other self would be shortly wrapping up giving the news to his students, which meant less time until he would return to iron out the rest of the details.

Nedzu had been incredibly delighted to finally be able to communicate and give free reign to his intellect with another person who could keep up with him. He hadn't felt so challenged in ages!

Speaking of challenge, the concept of the Civil War presented a beautiful test for the students. It would undoubtedly produce very interesting results!

That reminded him of one of the files his counterpart had sent him, with instructions to view it once alone. It had been named "HCCW-Promotion XX-Year 1", if his memory didn't fail him (which almost never did). He supposed he could watch it now, since he had a bit of free time.

The video's first image was of a group of students, seemingly led by Bakugo, holding a meeting.

He pressed play.

If you asked Shinso Hitoshi about what the Principal had said as a

closing statement, he wouldn't have been able to tell you.

He was too busy watching Izuku shift from Deku to Kingpin.

It was subtle, Hitoshi had to admit. If you didn't know Izuku well, missing it was easy.

But Hitoshi knew him.

He knew how to spot the change in his posture, from relaxed to confident. Knew how to look for the sudden stillness of his nervous habits. Knew how to see the glint of steel in his eyes.

Izuku whips out his phone, shooting off a single message to the villain group chat: an image of the villain insignia.

All over, the villains stand up from their seats, heading to their table in unison.

Hitoshi's been knocked off-centre about this whole...thing. He hadn't been expecting to be playing the role of Con Man until the next Civil War. Hell, not even then! The teams would be reshuffled and he could have been in the heroes' side. He's nowhere near prepared for this.

But, Izuku is relying on him to pull him back from the edge, to keep him from going past the point of no return. Hitoshi can't let him down, and he knows Izuku will do his best to make the most out of the situation with everyone in mind.

So, he breathes in to calm his nerves, and switches sides to sit at Izuku's right. He turns to face the approaching crowd.

Mezo– no, Assault takes an empty table with him on the way, and the rest of the villains soon follow his example. Hitoshi moves to direct them, and in a matter of seconds they have a big enough table to seat everybody. Hacker and Assault sit at Izuku's left, Forgery and himself to his right. Izuku sits at the head of the table, his interlocked hands leaving only his eyes in view. The manic glint in them turns his stare from intense to ominous.

"Should– should we go away?" asks Uraraka. One of her hands is messing with the hem of her skirt and she keeps shifting her weight restlessly.

"No, don't!" says Forgery, smiling as she creates pens and a few sheets of paper and hands them over to Izuku. "All of you are no longer

enemies of ours. You are allies and you will be treated as such."

Uraraka hesitates and glances over at Iida. He's staring at the whole group with an expression that's a mixture between pained and horrified, which ends up looking like he really needs to go to the bathroom.

Todoroki simply blinks and moves to seat himself, before Izuku stops him.

"Actually, could you guys call the other heroes and bring them here?" Izuku asks, looking at the three of them with a smile like honey.

They crumble in seconds.

Hitoshi doesn't envy them, they're going to have to convince Bakugo to come. At least they won't have to convince the little purple fucker, since he was expelled. That was still a novelty worthy of being celebrated.

"So what's the plan?" asks Hitoshi and interlaces their hands together.

Izuku squeezes his hand, harder than he would have expected. 'He's nervous,' Hitoshi realizes. 'Just as nervous as I am. Possibly even more.'

"I'm thinking on it," promises Izuku, and leans into Hitoshi for a second. Then, he straightens up and completely slides the metaphorical mask of the Kingpin on.

Both Heroics Classes look expectantly at him, even Bakugo, though he's sitting a few ways over with most of the Bakusquad. They way the Bakusquad's chairs are set creates a weird row from where Bakugo is, starting with Kirishima and ending in Drug-runner, sitting beside Lift.

"What are we going to start with? Team composition?" asks Hold Up and Graffiti sitting beside him nods.

"No, explaining them how our team works is the first thing we should do," says Larceny, smiling rudely at the heroes, most of them at the other side of the table.

"Larceny, allies remember?" says Forgery gently. Larceny has the decency to smile sheepishly, but he doesn't apologize. "And even then, skill-evaluation should always be the first step when creating a team,"

she adds. She gets a few nods for her comment.

“Thank you everybody for your input,” says Kingpin, rising from his chair. “But we’re forgetting something very important,” he continues gravely, walking behind his chair and using the back of it as an armrest.

“Do all of you want to participate in the War?” he asks.

“Uhh, what do you mean?” asks Kaminari.

“The last Civil War was part of the curriculum. We had no option but to participate or fail. This War? Nedzu-san said his counterpart had agreed with the possibility of conducting the exercise. It’s not fixed, it’s not obligatory,” explains Kingpin, slowly walking around the table.

“It’s okay if you guys don’t want to participate. I’m sure that if we talked with Nedzu-san we could even cancel the whole thing. We could figure something out for those who don’t want to fight. I don’t want to force any of you to do something you don’t want to do if I can help it,” he says, eyes shining with honesty.

“But know that if you agree, it doesn’t matter if I’m your leader or not, I’ll still expect you to give it your all. We’re here to become the best heroes we can be, and that means knowing how our enemies behave. It’s all or nothing. ‘Plus Ultra’, remember?”

He stops at the other side of the table– the side that has the most heroes.

“So? What will it be?”

Larceny holds out a hand in a fist, pointing it towards the middle of the table.

“As if there was any question,” he says.

Animal wordlessly does the same, smiling all the while.

The villains one by one hold out their hands, forming a half-circle with a few spaces interspersed. There is no hesitation in any of them, Hitoshi notices. Even Extortion, who got literally shot in the back, holds out her hand fearlessly.

Kaminari is the first hero to hold out his hand.

“What?” he says. “All of you saw how absolutely insane the villains

were. They wiped the floor with us! And all of them discovered at least one new thing about their Quirks! You can't tell me that isn't cool," concludes Kaminari, looking pleased with himself.

Todoroki follows, but he gives no explanation as to why. Hitoshi isn't sure why he was so adamant to be a hero las time and now wants to be a villain so easily. He doesn't want to ask, but curiosity is going to drive him crazy. Meh. He'll just ask Izuku to do it later.

Tsuburaba holds out his hand next and moves to sit beside Hold Up and Graffiti. Kamakiri holds out his hand too, nodding solemnly at the Kingpin. Uraraka goes next, enthusiastically holding out her hand, her previous nervousness forgotten. Asui goes next, then Shishida, Testsutetsu, Manga, Ojiro…

One by one, hand by hand, the circle starts to close.

Now there's only two hands missing. Kingpin's and Bakugo's.

Everybody looks at them. Some, like Sero, with apprehension. Others, like Ochako, with worry. Extortion's staring in open disgust, Kirishima with hope. And some, like Mei, with curiosity on how sweaty Kingpin will get if they fight.

"I'm fighting," grinds out Bakugo. There's a flash of surprise among the people at the table. He makes no move to hold out his hand. "But I won't take your orders, Deku," he says, staring straight into Kingpin's eyes with the kind of hate he'd never seen from anyone before.

Bakugo stands up and takes his chair with him. Kirishima makes a move to go after him, apologizing in his behalf.

The circle is never completed.

"Did you guys hear?!?" Ashido shouted at the classroom.

"Of course we did Pinky, we have fucking ears! Now shut the fuck up!" shouts Bakugo even louder.

Ashido completely ignores Bakugo, which balls to her, man.

Denki still has no idea of what she's talking about.

"No, dude. What is it?" he says while packing his things. Well, more like just throwing all his school supplies together into his bag, which

always ends up making a giant mess.

“We’re going to fight our other-us!”

Bakugo perks up at the mention of “fight”, and Sero looks up from his phone, setting it aside. Denki takes a chair and turns in around to sit on it.

“Yeah! I can’t wait to meet my other self! Our fight’s gonna be so manly!” exclaims Kirishima and seats himself on the desk.

“Don’t you already have another self?” asks Sero, who’s grin is as wide as it can get.

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

“Did you forget about Tetsutetsu?” teases Kaminari.

“Oh, come on! We’re not that alike! Stop laughing Ashido! Guyyyys”

Denki can’t help it. Kirishima’s done-with-everything expression is too funny, so he keeps on laughing until Bakugo gets fed up and unleashes an explosion on all of their faces.

“Shut up losers!”

“Oh come on Bakugo!,” says Kirishima, grinning from ear to ear. “Aren’t you excited about this?”

“Hell yes I am! I’m going to crush my other me!”

“So you’re saying you’re gonna lose,” says Ashido and expertly dodges one of Bakugo’s swipes.

“Don’t twist my fucking words you soggy–”

Ding!

“Guys look!” says Sero, pulling out his phone from his pocket.

Denki practically jumps out of his chair, almost faceplants (not cool) but still gets to Sero’s side with only a minimum of snickers from his friends.

“Students of UA, as of today, yada yada yada– here it is. The following attachment contains information on the UA War exercise ,” reads Sero, taps a few times, skims over the things they already know, and

continues: “‘Tomorrow during the joint Heroics Class, a vote will be held among the two Heroics classes, of both UA’s, in order to choose each of their team leaders–’”

“Not another vote!” interrupts Denki, throwing his hands around to emphasize his point.

“What, still salty only you voted for yourself?” says Ashido, hand on her hips.

“You only got your own vote too!” quips back Denki.

“I’m going to keep reading! Wait, I lost it, oh nevermind– ‘choose their team leaders’… ‘The exercise will be three days long’, just like the last one, apparently… ‘Seven days of preparation, counting the weekend’, wait we lose our weekend for this?”

“No one fucking cares! Keep reading!”

“Ok, geez. ‘The students will have a lighter class load’, sweet! We can plan and share ideas for the War before the days of preparation, we just can’t actually put them into practice until then… ‘No permanent damage on students, no killing’, the usual stuff… ‘Rulebooks will be given the first day of preparation and need to be read completely’… ‘No spying on the days of preparation, no fighting with the people on the other team before the exercise begins’… ‘Only members of the Hero Classes will be able to participate, though exceptions will be allowed with consent from at least two UA teachers and their counterparts’, wow, wonder why that’s a rule. ‘Since the exercise is not part of the normal curriculum, it can’t be graded. But, it will give extra credit if the student’s performance merits it. Details on said merits will be present on the rulebook.’”

“Hell yes! I’m almost failing math! This thing is a godsend!” cheers Denki and starts a victory dance. Ashido joins him, shouting her own happiness and doing her dance moves as wildly as she can. Kirishima starts dancing too just because, doing the sprinkler because why not?

“All of you look like idiots dancing without music,” says Bakugo, leaning back on a chair and putting his feet on the desk, smirking as if he was looking at a couple of dogs chase their tails. Rude!

A second after music starts blasting from Sero’s phone, and he stands up to dance too, doing that thing where you shuffle-run in place. Kirishima attempts to do a twirl and knocks a chair over, which for some reason sends all of them into a fit of laughter. Ashido tries to dip

Sero, but their difference in height makes things difficult. Kirishima tries to get Bakugo to dance with him, Bakugo tells him to fuck off. Still, Denki saw Bakugo tapping his foot in time with the beat less than a second ago, so he just wishes that Explody would stop being such a tsundere and join them for once.

Denki decides to do a fantastic air guitar solo, complete with throwing himself on the ground while continuing to rock his imaginary guitar. He gets whoops from everybody and even a wolf-whistle from Ashido.

The door of opens and all of them freeze.

Aizawa stares at their impromtu dance party in the classroom, which, if the clock on the wall doesn't betray Denki, is at least twenty minutes later than they were supposed to stay.

A second Aizawa steps into the doorway, this one wearing the red piece of cloth around his bicep that their doubles use to show they're not from this timeline.

"Out," says their Aizawa, and all of them scramble to get their things and go out the door.

Once they're out of the zone of danger, they burst into giggles. Except Bakugo, who grouches at them for getting him into trouble. 'Whatever, dude' thinks Denki and looks back at the classroom curiously.

He catches the tail-end of red-band-Aizawa's expression, and Denki does a double-take.

Was it him, or did Aizawa look worried for them?

Mirror

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Summary

> Canon students finally meet their doubles! And the first thing they do is, of course, fight!

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing
>
> Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

The air is electric in Modern Literature Class.

That is Shoto's thinking in said class, trying to concentrate amidst the excitement. The spare classroom they're in is, at first glance, orderly and calm. But everytime the atmosphere wins over Shoto's self-control, he can see little notes being passed from person to person. He doesn't know what they say, but he guesses one of them will get to him soon enough.

He tries to concentrate on the reading they're supposed to be doing.

He fails.

Instead, he thinks of the upcoming Heroics Class and Shoto can't help but be nervous.

They're not in their home turf, as much as this UA looks like their own. They don't belong there at all, and that puts them at a disadvantage.

And, under Midoriya's orders, they're supposed to each watch their double as closely as they can without being suspicious. Those orders are easy for him, since he's normally watching everything, even more so after he started his lessons with the Principal.

He's not enthused about watching another version of himself for mistakes and weaknesses. He has enough with the ones he sees everyday when he looks in the mirror. He's tired of suppressing his

father's voice in his head, the one that keeps spitting insults every time he doesn't meet his expectations.

He shakes his head. That train of thought was going to get him nowhere, and the reading's a lost cause at this point. He stealthily takes out a sheet of paper and starts writing down possible villain names and sketching a tentative villain costume, mindful of Cementoss' eyes.

It's a shame that their Cementoss from their UA was not pulled with them, but Shoto supposes losing five teachers and the Principal was going to be a hard enough trial on their UA. He hopes it's still standing by the time they get back.

His mind drifts to the discussion with Midoriya after they agreed with participating in the U.A. Civil War. It was… enlightening to say the least.

Midoriya had talked about the basics of creating a distinct persona of yourself, how to take your own habits and mannerisms and twist them, make them seem intimidating. It had started to click as to how Midoriya had managed to go from a baby deer, scurrying away with each sound, to a viper, unseen and unheard until it had sunk its fangs on you.

He thought before, that knowing how Midoriya had done it would take away the air of mystery and danger around it. He was right, in part. The mystery was almost gone, true, but now he saw just how much effort had been put into crafting that façade. How Midoriya had taken every detail of himself, even his mumbling, and turned it into a weapon.

And now Shoto had to do the same for himself.

He supposed he had a headstart on being intimidating, his father had taught him that early into their training.

He lost himself in the new words, and names and lines he drew in the paper, each of them defining the blurry image in his head.

'Remember, all of you are villains,' Midoriya had said, leaning over Shoto's shoulder to see the notes Iida was taking. 'Heroes normally incorporate their Quirk into their name and costume in order to create a marketable image. Villains don't need that, and in most cases don't want that. You can choose whatever you want, even the most obscure or nonsensical of names and designs, as long as it's practical. I trust all

of you will make good decisions if you keep that in mind!' he had finished cheerfully, before going to another group.

'Anything I want…' thinks Shoto, penning down a name.

Someone leaves a piece of paper on his desk, and Shoto was so absorbed in his task that he didn't know who had done it. He takes the piece of paper anyway and reads it carefully.

The request detailed in the paper is something he hadn't expected, in all honesty, but he could see the tactical value of it, the intent behind the action. He signed his name on it, and discreetly passed it to the next person who hadn't signed, in this case being Aoyama.

He doesn't get back to his design, since he can spot two more papers coming his way.

The second paper seems unnecessary at first, remarking on how they need to make the past Civil War seem nothing more than a fun exercise they did once and not the unmitigated carnage that had truly been. Still, the suggestions the paper had on how to do that were pretty good and well-thought out, so Shoto still read it until the end, signed it and passed it along.

The third paper–

What.

What the hell?

Who's idea was this?

Why does it have so many signatures?

Just what the hell is going on?

Mezo's walking out onto the training ground Alpha in full hero costume, when he sees his double.

The other him is softly talking with a guy with purple hair he didn't remember seeing before, both of them sporting the red bands of the other UA.

Soon, the chatter dies out as all of them notice their other selves. For a second Mezo is struck with the thought of looking at a living mirror.

Before he's conscious of it, he has shifted some of his appendages into eyes in order to pick out the tiny differences between the two groups.

Other-Aoyama's costume is markedly sleeker, and his glasses were a soft blue and silver, which admittedly clashed less with the rest of his costume. He spotted how other-Kouda still shifted nervously, but his posture was decidedly less meek and curved. He had to stare for a bit, but he spotted how other-Midoriya's scars were lighter than his counterpart in a few places. He also, strangely, couldn't spot Mineta anywhere. Was he sick or did he get left behind on the other timeline? Mezo made a mental note to ask later. Finally, he noticed how his own double had a nick he didn't remember having on his jaw, and that he was also using his appendages to look at everybody in the class.

The mirror metaphor struck Mezo even harder than before.

He's saved from a minor existential crisis by the 'I am here!' of both All Mights, stepping out into the field. They both wore clothes that finally fit them, and carried notepads. A second later, only one Aizawa stepped into the field, the one wearing the red band, since he didn't have another class to teach.

That Aizawa had already taken out his sleeping bag and was getting ready to get in.

"Listen up, because I'm only going to say this once," drawled the red-band Aizawa. "The students from my UA, the one from the other timeline, are going to be referring to themselves by their villain aliases. Whoever does the illogical thing and calls them by their normal names would not only create confusion, but would also get an extra essay on practicality in the field due in two days. Understood?"

"Hai!" chorused forty voices. Aizawa gets fully into his sleeping bag, zips it up and dozes off.

"Alright! Let's begin!" say in unison both All Mights, which follows the world's most awkward exchange of "you first" "no, you first" "I truly insist, you first".

Eventually, the red-band All Might decides to go first.

"Villain team! Please, share your names with the rest of the class!"

Mezo is seriously hoping the essay thing is a logical ruse, because learning twenty names with just one mention of them is something

he's not sure about being able to pull off.

A few names stick to his memory pretty quickly though. Like Sato being called "Overdose", or Todoroki being called "Singularity", or his own counterpart being called "Assault". One sticks out from the rest though:

"My name is Kingpin!" says Midoriya, a big smile on his face. "I know that it's supposed to be the name of the leader of the villains. I didn't have a reason to create another name, so if the votes say otherwise, I'll change it!"

"You were the leader of the villains?" asks Hagakure, her sleeve raising up to show that she's holding up a hand.

"Yeah! I was really surprised when I got chosen!" answers Kingpin with a grin, then moves to the side to make way for… Forgery, apparently.

"Now that that's done!" calls out their All Might. "We'll do a light warm up, and then everybody will pair up to fight their double!"

Cheers rise from everyone around, though Mezo doesn't join them. Instead, he clears his mind and breathes deeply, beginning his preparations for the fight.

"Con Man! It's Con Man, right?" asks their All Might, going towards the shock of purple hair. "As you can see, your double is not here! His schedule conflicted with ours, so instead you will pair up against Mineta-shonen! Though don't worry, Con Man-shonen! He'll be joining us tomorrow!"

Con Man nods and says nothing, though his smile is very telling on what he's planning to do with that information.

"What are you waiting for, children!" calls red-band All Might, this time. "Go warm up!"

Shota has long ago perfected the art of looking as if he's asleep when he's not. It's come in handy in multiple missions, and for catching students doing things they shouldn't just because he's not there to watch over them. Only a few beings see through this façade: Hizashi, Nedzu, and Mr Fluffles.

He uses the opportunity to assess each of his student's performance. He can tell that Feedback and his double Kaminari are trying to shirk part of their warm up, going by the rhythm of their footsteps. Poison Dart, or Dart for short, is swimming as a way of warming up. She's having fun racing with her counterpart, splashing far too loud, 'kero's ringing out from time to time. Someone started a push-up contest, and, going by the voices, the competitors are three counterpart pairs: Kirishima and Tank, Uraraka and Dead Drop, and Bakugou and Powerhouse.

Iida is attempting to stop the competition, but the competitor's rebuttals leave him nothing to contradict or scold. His counterpart, Crusade, has learned to recognize a lost cause when he sees one, apparently. Instead of outright stopping them, he's trying to make them take the competition a bit more lightly. It seems to be working, to his credit.

Both All Mights call everyone to stop and divide themselves into two groups of ten counterpart pairs each. The two Iidas take charge and divide the class quickly and efficiently, looking remarkably like orchestra conductors. The two All Mights give one group the order to spar, while the remaining twenty people act as spectators and take notes.

Shota risks opening his eye a crack to watch the students as they get into ready positions. The pair nearest to him is the odd one out; the Con Man - Mineta pair. Let this be a test for Con Man, Shota's had enough with him feeling like he didn't truly earn his place in the hero course.

An air horn rips through the training ground and movement flares out erratically.

Mineta tries to launch one of his sticky balls right at Con Man's mouth, which would have worked if Shota hadn't made a point to target his mouth time and time again during training. Con Man dodges out of the way, putting distance between him and his target.

"This is so lame! I thought I would get to fight myself, not the General Studies kid that got dragged here with everyone else!" says Mineta, chucking balls at the ground, effectively turning it into a minefield for everyone but himself.

Con Man moves to respond, but Mineta immediately starts attacking mercilessly, taking advantage of his more developed stamina and

fighting style. Con Man tries to counter as best he can, but he doesn't have the experience his opponent has, quickly losing ground and inching towards the boundary of their arena.

Mineta makes a sticky ball whip, sweeping it towards Con Man's feet, and throwing another one of his balls directly at him when he's in the air. He can't dodge, so he turns his head and lets the projectile stick onto his face. Con Man reaches into his pocket and jumps forward, a collapsible bo staff springing to its full length. It takes Mineta by surprise for a second, which allows Con Man to get one solid hit to Mineta's face.

Shota admits that when he had suggested getting a weapon to Con Man, he didn't think he would go to his girlfriend Forgery for advice. Still, the results had been undeniable. Those two were fearsome with staffs in their hands.

Mineta recovers quickly, sticking a ball on Con Man's staff and then dragging it to the ground, effectively sticking it in place.

That is the reason Shota had put up with Mineta in his own timeline. Mineta may have been cowardly and a sexual harasser, but he had potential. When his mind was calm, he had good plans and split-second decisions. Shota's goal had been to snip those tendencies and bring about the hero Shota knew he could be, but he refused to change time and time again.

Con Man steps back and drags the point of his staff with him. Mineta, too busy feeling pleased with his own skills, fails to see what Con Man is doing. He lets the point of the staff go, which springs back towards Mineta, smacking him in the head.

"Ow!" cries Mineta stepping back and taking time to rub the wound.

Big mistake.

"You thought I am in General Studies," says Con Man with a smile eerily similar to Shota's own. "You're wrong. I took your place in my timeline, Mineta. You were expelled. All of the girls celebrated that you were gone."

"What?!?" cries out Mineta, recoiling as if he'd been dealt a physical blow. Shota is not at all sure if Mineta's more upset about being expelled, or not being able to be near the girls. A second later his eyes go blank.

“Say you give up, then pinch yourself lightly,” orders Con Man.

“I give up,” says Mineta, without any kind of inflection to his words.

Con Man immediately reaches out to his staff and leans on it, panting hard. A bead of sweat falls from his temple to his mouth, and he immediately sputters and tries to spit it out. It doesn’t quite work.

Mineta’s mind blinks into awareness, realizing what happened and shrieking: “Are you serious?!?”

“Deadly serious,” grinds out Con Man. Shota recognizes that Con Man’s trying to go for cheeky, but it just sounds as out of breath. Yet, adding the sharp grin he’s wearing, the dirt all over him and the gleeful glint in his eyes, he ends up looking slightly feral.

Mineta takes a step back and turns around, running back to where all the people who have finished their matches are clumped together.

Shota sighs audibly. Con Man jumps and whirls around.

“You’re awake?” he asks disbelievingly.

“You need to be more observant, I’m adding that to your next lesson.” Shota deadpanned. “Mineta’s screech woke me up,” he adds, lying effortlessly.

Con Man blinks and nods, seating himself on the ground.

“So?” says Shota.

“So?” parrots Con Man, a confused expression on his face.

“Conclusions on the fight,” drawls Shota, closing his eyes once again.

“Mineta had more stamina and speed than I did, and an extra semester of experience. He was creative while using his Quirk and zeroed in on one of my weak spots right at the start. But, he is easily distracted and knocked off-guard. These weaknesses allowed me to beat–”

“No. ‘I took advantage of those weaknesses’. Try again,” interrupts Shota.

“I took advantage of those weaknesses and won because of it,” corrects Con Man.

“Good. Now did you learn anything from this fight?”

“Yeah,” says Con Man. He doesn’t elaborate on what, but he doesn’t need to. Shota can see a new glint of confidence in Con Man’s eyes, and that’s exactly what the goal of this match-up was.

“Two things,” calls out Shota suddenly. “One, you have a rock in your hair. Two, your boyfriend’s fight is about to begin.”

Con Man curses having missed his girlfriend’s fight and scrambles to get up, while searching for the rock in the purple bush he calls hair.

Shota smiles softly at his retreating back, and goes back to pretending he’s asleep.

‘On second thought’, he thinks as he sees the two Bakugos step up to fight. ‘Maybe getting closer would be best.’

OMAKE:

Mineta walked away hurriedly from the fight, pausing once he was far enough to catch his breath.

‘That guy was creepy,’ he thought. ‘Majorly creepy.’

He was knocked out of his thoughts by the sound of metal clang against metal, and he saw…

He saw heaven.

TWO Yaoyorozus fighting each other, their uniforms ripped in multiple places. He couldn’t help but drool, entranced by the way their breasts jiggled up and down in the battle.

Creepy guy’s words flashed through his head.

No! He couldn’t get himself expelled! The teachers don’t like him “looking” at the girls, so if he wants to become a hero, he should shape up and stop! He needs to be cool, like Midoriya!

Forgery– that was her villain name right?– suddenly created another staff from her wrist, which was sent out so quickly that it caught Yaoyorozu off-guard. It ripped her belt off, giving Mineta a pretty nice view of her hips.

Maybe he should just tone it down a bit, just enough to not get kicked out.

Yaoyorozu retaliated, swinging her staff and narrowly missing Forgery's head. Instead, she catches Forgery's hairdo hard enough to get it completely loose. The strands of hair brush just above the curve of Forgery's ass.

Did the UNIVERSE ITSELF not care about his declaration! This is just unfair!

Ok, ok. He can get over this.

Mineta turned left, seeing Uraraka grab her counterpart and slam her to the ground, where they start to wrestle.

"REALLY!" he screamed to no one in particular.

He then stomps to the nearby water cooler.

If he keeps taking glances back and drooling, well, no one has to know.

Setting the Board

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Summary

Main events for the chapter:
- Hatsume meets Hacker
- Deku vs Kingpin
- Voting

Enjoy!

Chapter Notes

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

People dove into corridors for cover. Some hid in the classrooms, or behind their own works. One even used their Quirk to get out of her way.

‘They should really be more careful!’ thought Hacker, as people got out of her way. ‘We aren’t supposed to use Quirks outside of PE!’. She continued to giggle, happy at how thoughtful of her classmates’ counterparts to get out of her way! She fiddled with the memory stick she had gotten from Forgery, and spun it in the air. She was careful though! The stick held everything she had saved on her phone, from her favorite songs to the latest project she had been working on.

‘Ha! Take that Con Man! Keeping her projects with her at all times did really have an use, no matter how much memory they took up.’ she thought, knocking on the door to paradise.

It opened with an explosion.

Hacker simply tapped the side of her head, which deployed a gas mask. Nobody could tell her she had learned nothing for the past Civil War! Gas masks do rock!

“OHMYGOSH YOU’RE HEREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!” says Hatsume. It’s kind of weird to call someone else by your name, but in spirit of practicality she would do it without hesitation!

“I KNOOOOOOW!!!” responds Hacker. Both take each other’s hand and start jumping up and down in place, launching right into a discussion of the meat of things. A mecha! If they could get permission from the Power Loaders, it would make their week!

They both turn in unison towards them. “No,” is their immediate response.

Hacker lets out wail of disappointment, which lasts only a second when she remembers the baby she was making for Hagakure. Hacker tells Mei, and she practically snatches the memory stick right out of Hacker’s hands. Mei sticks it immediately, copying most files and perusing each folder with glee.

“Did you bring the things you made for the last Civil War?!?” Mei asks excitedly, looking over a few of the costumes and the gas masks’ designs critically.

“Of course I did! It was the best testing ground for all my babies!!!” exclaims Hacker, and before Mei can ask anymore about it, she finds the folder for Hagakure’s new hero costume, and begins talking DNA integration.

Because she knows herself, Mei forgets fast about the Civil War, and launches right into pointing out flaws and improvements for the costume. She doesn’t notice the folder titled “Homework, CW”, containing the designs for the Red Goo guns, the Holowall, and the most intimidating costumes. More important was what little she could reconstruct of blueprints of the vehicles and bigger artillery.

She had felt guilty for maybe a minute for hiding so many babies from her other self, but she had then remembered she could share the designs after the UA War was done.

‘In the meantime,’ she thought, her grin widening and hands flying over the designs. ‘I have a war to *win* .’

Deku lightly jumped in place to keep warm, and maybe a little because he was nervous. His mind whirled with a thousand thoughts, replaying the fights he had seen time and time again. Like how Sparkle used shorter bursts than Aoyama, or how Ojiro had that one somersault down better than Temperance, or how Feedback had tried to overload Kaminari, and Kaminari had the same idea and they knocked each other out a minute into the battle, or how–

“Huh. It does look kind of creepy when I do that.”

Deku squeaks and turns around to see Kingpin blink and look as if he hadn’t wanted to say that outloud.

“Oh, I’m sorry I didn’t mean to call you creepy, though I did kinda call myself creepy? Wait, this doesn’t make sense, what am I saying?”

“Don’t– don’t worry about it,” answers Izuku and laughs nervously. There’s a bit of an awkward pause between them, until Kingpin says: “Looks like our fight is next!”.

“Yeah, it is! Let’s do our best!”

“Why don’t we trade notes on it after the fight?”

“Sure!” answers Deku, and moves to take his place at the ring.

“Can’t we fight a bit more separated from the Bakugos?” asks Kingpin, throwing glances their way. Powerhouse and Bakugou are snarling at each other, teeth bared, insults and fists ready to fly. Deku had already gone to a circle a few ways away from those two, but if the way they’re staring at each other was any indication, there was going to be a lot of debris flying everywhere very soon.

Izuku just nods and both of them walk towards another arena. Deku takes a deep breath, and starts watching his opponent. Most of their similarities are there, from the position of his fists, the angle in which his body’s facing, the intense focus in his gaze. If he knows himself, he’ll probably start by testing the waters, sending a few attacks just to gauge their differences and gather more information. But, since he’’s him, he probably thought that too. And he also arrived to that same conclusion before.

‘What do you do when your opponent thinks exactly the same as you?’ considers Izuku, tensing as his All Might raises the whistle to his lips.

‘You don’t *think* .’

The whistle goes off.

Deku only has time to duck out of the way of Kingpin’s kick, throwing himself on the ground a few ways over. He ignores the taste of dust in his mouth to avoid a stomp coming his way.

‘When the hell did he get so fast?!?’ thinks Deku and jumps back to

put as much distance to Kingpin as he can.

Of course, Kingpin doesn't let him go very far, but the moment he gained is enough to watch–

"–Since when do we produce lightning? And for that matter, why is it green?" asks Deku. He knows stopping a fight to talk is a very bad idea, but the question just popped out of his mouth!

Kingpin pauses. He stares at him, and Deku stares back at the green sparks popping up everywhere on him. One for All is not truly a strengthening Quirk, but a power-stockpile Quirk. Maybe it's surplus power being expelled? Is it even truly an electrical current? Deku's never noticed it until now and Kingpin seems to be in the same situation.

"DIE YOU PIECE OF SHIT!"

BOOM

Oh, yeah. They're supposed to be fighting!

Deku bursts forward to take a swipe at Kingpin, who dodges with an awesome backflip! Izuku can't do that, he's definitely going to ask him to teach him that later!

Kingpin rebounds and tries to seep Deku's legs from under him, but Izuku takes advantage of the situation and kicks him squarely in the chest. Kingpin goes flying and rolls to a stop very close to the boundary. He stands up, clutching his chest. His hand is slightly bleeding through a rip in his glove. His eyes are really wide though.

"How are you that strong?!?" Kingpin says, and winces.

"Did I over do it? I still can't control 5% very well–"

"I'm still at 3%! How did you manage that?!?"

"You're a lot faster than me though!" Kingpin thinks about his statement for a moment before shrugging.

Kingpin then demonstrates said speed by darting forward, swinging his fist towards Deku's face. It connects, and it doesn't hurt as much as Izuku expects, though Deku closes his eyes, worried that the blood on Kingpin hand would get in them. Infected eyes sound pretty hoooorrrrrr–

There are books sprawled on the table, from history to chemistry. He's chewing on the end of a pencil thoughtfully, reading over a question from Literature Class. The air's cold, but it's still not dark enough outside to leave the hidden corner of forest he and Momo had found.

"What are you thinking of, Izuku?" she asks, setting her pencil down in between the pages of the book.

"We'll have to go inside soon," he says, and he can't keep the disappointment out of his voice. "It's nice out here. Peaceful."

A runaway strand of Momo's hair is flowing in the wind, and Izuku tucks it behind her ear gently. He lets his hand caress her cheek. She smiles and leans into his touch, her voice light and chiming like bells. She gently tugs him towards her, hugging him and nuzzling her head in the crook of his neck. Izuku presses a light kiss, just below her ear, and she bursts out laughing.

"You're ticklish there?" Izuku asks.

"Quite so," she answers, a light dusting of red on her cheeks. Izuku leans for another kiss, and she giggles, hiding her head in his hair.

"Izuku?"

"Hmm?" he responds, looking at her shy smile. She leans forward and captures his lips with her own.

She tastes like the tea and cookies they ate, but it's a thousand times better than how Izuku remembers it. Warmth rises to Izuku's cheeks, and he hums, circling Momo's waist with his arms. She threads a hand into his hair, and Izuku can feel her eyelashes on his skin, her heartbeat through his chest–

-Izuku stepped back and tripped onto the ground. His heart was beating hummingbird fast, his face red as a tomato, and he had a slight nose bleed. Not from the vision! Not from that, no, from Kingpin's punch. That was definitely going to bruise.

Kingpin, on the other side of the ring, was pale white, his hand pressed to his mouth. He leans over and retches, thankfully nothing coming out of his mouth.

Deku goes up to help Kingpin up, and he thankfully takes his hand. Kingpin shakes his head and takes a slow breath, before letting it out just as slowly.

“What the fuck just happened?” both of them ask at the exact same time.

“Did you see–” Kingpin cuts himself off to gesture vaguely with his hands. His face is still pretty pale, and he looks like he could throw up at any second, so Deku guesses they saw two different things.

“I– uh. I saw Momo. I think it was a study session. She… kissed…me”

“You saw that?” asks Kingpin. “… Lucky bastard.”

Okay, so apparently his other self didn’t keep his curse words to himself.

“What did you see?”

“I’m no–”

“Hey guys! You ok?” They were interrupted by Kaminari coming over to them. “You both froze before– WOW you guys look horrible!”

“No shit,” mumbles Kingpin.

“Uh? What’d you say?”

“Nothing, Kaminari. Maybe we should go to Recover Girl. Kaminari, can you tell All Might where we are?”

“Sure!” he says, doing a thumbs and practically yelling to All Might.

Before they left, Izuku noticed Kacchan staring at him. Odd, it wasn’t in red hot hatred and detest like usual, it was more contemplation and curiosity. What was– “Focus on the fight, fucker!” Powerhouse yells and punches Kacchan in the face.

“Then give me a challenge, asshole!” Kacchan says returning a punch to the jaw. And like that, the living bombs returned to murdering each other.

“You still haven’t told me what you saw,” asks Deku hesitantly.

“…It was dark, so I thought I had gone blind for a second. Then there was cold, and blood and light end everything was *so loud.* Now that I think about it… I think I saw a birth. Our birth.”

‘That makes a disturbing amount of sense,’ Izuku thinks and shudders. But wait–

“That means we’re seeing each other’s memories, right?”

“Yeah!” Kingpin says, his eyes lighting up with the possibilities of something like that. “...maybe it’s a power transfer?... memories as power?... true holders, not a copy, didn’t happen with Larceny...we should probably tell this to All Might later.”

Izuku would be thinking in the same lines if it wasn’t for a very tiny detail: “Did the kiss with Momo really happen?”, he asks not really sure what to feel about it, except flustered.

“She’s been great to me and Shinso … and Mei.” It was only through sheer force of will and adrenaline that Izuku didn’t pass out then and there. Kingpin laughed, but he put a hand on Deku’s shoulder to help steady him. “That’s what I feel every day for being so lucky to have their affection,” he says, fondness written all over his face, his eyes and his smile.

‘So that’s how I look when I’m in love,’ Izuku thought. “All of them at the same time?” Deku asked.

“All of them. Although we never tried a fourway.” Kingpin must have seen the look of confusion on his face. “Four people kissing at the same time.”

Deku splutters, hiding his face in his hands. Kingpin laughs again, his face finally back to his normal color.

Both of them finally arrive to Recovery Girl’s office, and Kingpin says they both felt nauseous during the battle. She runs a set of tests and nothing comes up, so she lets them go with the warning of coming right back to her if they felt nauseous again. It could be Izuku’s imagination, but she looks relieved for some reason.

“Sorry about … whatever that was.” Izuku says as they get up.

“Don’t be, we had no idea that would happen. In fact … I think we should experiment with that,” Kingpin suggests.

“Um … sure, but tomorrow. After all, we have the voting to do.” There was silence for a second.

“Crap!” Suddenly screams Kingpin. “The voting!”

They sprint down the corridor, activating Full Cowl halfway, careful to not leave any holes in the halls from their footsteps. Kingpin takes

the advantage fast, jumping around obstacles in the hall like they're not even there. Both of them jump over Kaminari, who squeaks and runs after them.

Deku grins and pushes his advantage, one of his strides being three of Kingpin's, and with that, the race is on.

Shoto thought knowing there was a counterpart of him and meeting said counterpart today would have prepared him for a lot … He realized how wrong he was when Kingpin jumped out through the window to the crowd of people waiting for the voting to begin.

A second later, Deku did the same, saying "Sorry for the wait!" and going up to them.

"Typical!" says Monoma, sneering at the two of them. "How thoughtless and arrogant of Class A to keep all of us waiting!"

His counterpart, Larceny, laughs haughtily but says nothing, instead leaning over to say something to Kend– wait, no, her name's Sleight.

Deku goes up to their group, trying his best to ignore Monoma's taunts, and asks "Did I miss something?"

"You did, kero. Aizawa-sensei already put up the voting terminals."

"Thanks!" says Izuku, and runs up to the tablets set up in a row. On the way he crashes into Yaoyorozu, which sends him sprawling into the floor. She offers him a hand to help him stand up, he takes it with a smile, and then blushes as red as Shoto's own hair. He apologizes and runs towards the tablet.

His double, Singularity, goes up to vote, nodding towards Kingpin. Shoto remembers his fight with his double very well. He was somehow a bit more proficient in simultaneous activation of his Quirk, but he didn't deal with frustration at his mistakes as well as he did. It occurs Shoto to just go up to him and ask him why that was, and since they're the same person and they already know the truth about their father, he could answer with the whole truth.

It's still weird for Shoto to be able to talk about that with anyone that isn't from his family. Being able to go up to Midoriya and talk without having to check if his words incriminated his father too much is something Shoto's not used to yet. Being able to talk with someone

who *understands* … Shoto doesn't know what to feel about that.

Maybe he could ask Midoriya how to speak to someone who lived the same life you did, he seemed to be getting along with his other self well enough.

Komori Kinoko, villain name "Parasite", casted her vote and with that, the elections ended.

"Students! We'll be showing the results in three!–"

Shoto makes his way closer to the screen, watching as it changes from "voting in progress", to displaying a hero column on one side, and a villain one on the other. Uraraka maneuvers to position herself in front of him, and he lets her. She's too short to see in the back.

"–Two!–"

Uraraka huffs contrarily and taps her fingers together, making herself float. Shoto takes her hand to act as a tether, and she smiles like sunshine at him. She has dimples, Shoto idly notes.

"– One!"

The results write themselves on the screen, white symbols over the blue background. Funnily enough only four names appear on the heroes' side.

"...Did both classes seriously vote for their own representatives?!?" says Sero, watching with dismay as both Kendo's and Iida's names have 19 votes each.

The other two votes are Monoma and Bakugou, who probably voted for themselves.

The two chosen "Paragons" blink and head towards each other, ignoring how Monoma is asking for a tie-breaker. They both begin a discussion that Shoto can't parse from where he's standing.

In the meantime, he glances to the screen of the villains.

Tied for fifth place, with two votes each were Powerhouse (Bakugou Katsuki) and Larceny (Monoma Neito). Clearly they also voted for themselves, but as for the extra votes, Shoto has no idea where they would have come from… Maybe Powerhouse's came from their Kirishima, codenamed Tank.

He saw his own double, Singularity, be tied with three other people, each of them with three votes. One of them was Basilisk, a B class student that looked chinese. The other was Smuggler, who Todoroki very vaguely remembered as the guy with the softening Quirk from the recommendations exam. He was saved from trying to remember his name by the script beside his villain name (Honenuki Juzo). The last one was Dart (Asui Tsuyu), who definitely had the calm countenance to be a pretty effective leader.

At third place stood Magdalene (Shiozaki Ibara). Shoto wonders what happened to make the votes so spread out, but quickly moves to the next line.

On second place were Sleight (Itsuka Kendo) and Crusade (Iida Tenya), mirroring the situation with the heroes. However, there was one more person in second place: Forgery (Yaoyorozu Momo). Yaoyorozu being so high up wasn't that much of a surprise, Shoto had gleaned from their final exam that she could be a very good leader, if only she stopped doubting herself.

However, he looked at the top spot and saw... *six* votes for Kingpin. Was Midoriya really that good of a leader in the last Civil War?

"What the FUCK!" Bakugou and Powerhouse screamed simultaneously. "How did I only get 1/2 votes!?" They looked at each other and snarled before looking away, realising it was a bit creepy.

"And how did De–Kingpin, manage the majority!" Bakugou said Bakugou, with only mild rage in his voice.

"Trust me Katsuki, I'm just as surprised as you are." At Kingpin's statement, Shoto saw Shoji frown out of the corner of his eye. Izuku looked over at him, his eyebrows furrowed in confusion. Todoroki could understand.

'What happened to calling him 'Kacchan'?' he thought.

"Wait!" screams Monoma. "The villains cheated! They have one more vote than they have people!"

"Good observation skills, young Monoma!" praises their All Might. "However, since young Hatsume was also involved in the last Civil War, and she is now participating with the villain team, she was also given a vote!"

Shoto realizes that was a sound decision, since it rules out the

possibility of a tie like the one the heroes have now. Speaking of that, both Iida and Kendo nod and go up to the front.

“Kids, hurry up,” says Aizawa from his sleeping bag. “One All Might has another class to teach, and the other has a staff reunion shortly.”

“We have decided to be co-Paragons!” announces Iida, raising his hand straight up into the sky.

“Then that settles it,” drawls Aizawa. “Due to the tie in votes, Iida and Kendo will be playing the role of Paragons, and the Kingpin will be played by… Kingpin.”

Aizawa moved to get out of his sleeping bag, looking like that very act was the worst punishment on Earth. “Cool-down stretches and then get out,” he grumbled out and then left.

“I can’t believe 1-B has to share their glorious leadership with 1-A.” Monoma complained.

“You think you have it bad, we have 1-A as the ONLY leader,” Larceny refuted.

“Finally, someone gets the greatness that is–” Monoma and Larceny were knocked out by Kendo and Sleight respectively. Shoto, meanwhile, turned back to see the results. There was something … ‘off’ about them, he just couldn’t figure out what.

He guesses he’ll have to wait and see.

Opening Moves

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Tsunotori Pony, or "Stampede", as she should be calling herself, is the last one to enter the classroom, quickly shutting the door behind her. She waves at Larceny, who makes gestures at a chair between him and Sleight.

She skips all the way there, greeting everybody in the meantime.

"What are we doing?" Stampede asks, setting her school bag down near her chair. They're supposed to be having lunch, but it was decided that they would eat as quickly as possible and then have a meeting. She didn't get enough time to eat at lunch, since Sleight had spoken a bit too fast when she told all of them about it and hadn't understood what she meant until everybody started standing up from their chairs.

Good thing she always carried carrots with her! It wouldn't do to arrive to her second joint Heroics Class with an empty stomach!

"We're talking about costumes and gear at the moment," says Kamakiri. Slasher! Slasher, that was his villain name. He holds up a sheet of paper detailing a costume, and Stampede recognizes Metaphor's work. It's pretty common for everyone to ask Fukidashi Manga to draw stuff for them, and she has to admit, the drawing's pretty impressive.

It takes Slasher's bug-like features and turns them from pretty cool-looking to a insectophobe’s nightmare. It looks a lot like an exoskeleton with blades coming out in multiple places. There's a full-face mask and if she's reading the annotation on the corner right, then it's eyes glow in the dark.

"It's so cool!" Stampede wishes she knew more Japanese to tell Slasher just how cool it is, but she just has to make do with a wide smile.

"Everybody!" calls Sleight, standing beside a computer hooked to a camera. "We've made connection with the A Class,so we can start the reunion!"

"Thank you for coming, everybody!" says Kingpin from the screen, sitting in the middle of the crowd. "We don't have much time, so I'll jump right into it. Is everybody done with designing their costumes?"

Stampede nods vigorously. She had a lot of fun doing that! Though it took her quite a few tries since the costume always ended not looking villainous enough.

"Good! Submit them all to Hacker, and she'll draw some blueprints and give suggestions. After that, the idea is for everyone to get the opportunity of seeing all of the costumes and offer suggestions or ideas on how to improve them. Is everybody ok with that?"

"Can I, uhm. Can people not comment on my costume?" says Nirengeki Shoda. Stampede has to think a bit to remember his villain name, but at last she gets it: Double Tap!

"Oh! Then just message Hacker and she'll turn that feature off for you!"

Double Tap looks immensely relieved, and Stampede sees Komori Kinoko, also known as Parasite, nod gratefully too.

"Moving on to next topic! I'm sure some of you have opened that mail I sent you a few minutes ago. Those names you got in it? That's going to be your introduction group."

Stampede remembers that she was in a group with Double Tap and Sleight. She doesn't really know either of them, but they seem like good people so she's pretty happy with the group she got!

"Your introduction group mostly consists of somebody who was a villain in the Civil War, and one or two ex-heroes. The purpose of this group is for the villain to fill the heroes in as to how the group worked and what to expect of being a villain. The only thing you guys really have to do with your group is hang out from time to time."

"Will these groups extend into the UA War?" asks Magdalene, eyeing her paper with some distaste. Stampede notices that Magdalene's vines seem to grow more thorns when she's mad.

"If you find you work well together, then yes," answers Kingpin, taking

notes in a notebook beside him.

"We really don't have much time left, so if anybody has any questions, please say them now."

"This question is rather off-topic, yet it needs to be said!" announces Crusade, moving his arms like a robot. It makes Stampede giggle, but she still does her best to pay attention. His language is really formal and sophisticated, so it takes a bit more effort to tell what he's saying.

"Will the remaining plan discussed yesterday in Literature Class be implemented?"

Stampede perks up immediately.

"We've already done the voting plan, and the Civil War understatement plan is underway, so I'm assuming you're talking about Drug-runner's plan?"

"Yes! Is it truly beneficial to our goal?" Crusade asks, this time talking to Drug-runner.

Drug-runner giggles and announces: "Of course! By giving the heroes something to focus on, they'll be less likely to notice anything important. They'll have a lot think about after all!"

Nervous giggles burst out in both classrooms, some people looking apprehensive, others pretty excited.

Stampede is one of the excited ones. She has already a few people in mind that she wouldn't mind working with at all!

"What if we don't want to participate?" asks Fractal. Drat! Kodai was one of the ones Stampede was looking forward to work with. Oh well.

"We'll ask everybody in the group chat if they want to participate or not," says Ashido. "But! If you need to ask someone if they would be willing to go along with the plan and there's a hero nearby, here's the way to do it: look at their fingers! Crossed means yes, anything else means no. Please do not ask if you can't see their fingers!"

In that moment, the bell rings, signaling for everybody to go to the last class before Heroics.

She can't wait! It's going to be amazing!

Ibara stood next to Kendo as they walked into the classroom, greeted by Iida and Yaoyorozu.

They both carried bento boxes, though the food Ibara could see in them was definitely that of Lunch Rush-sensei. They walked over to the four tables they had moved together to make a bigger one, and sat down.

“Thank you for coming!” says Kendo with a smile, seating herself opposite to Iida. Ibara took that as her cue and sat herself in front of Yaoyorozu. Ibara took out her own bento box and with a quick “Itadakimasu!” all of them began to eat.

“We have approximately 24 minutes until we have to continue to next class!” announces Iida loudly, looking goofy and formal simultaneously, which is something Ibara didn’t think was possible. He also looks like an action figure … should probably ask about that at some point.

“So, plans!” says Kendo taking out a few sheets of paper and pens. “I think our main problem right now would be making both classes work together. Maybe we should encourage both groups to spend more time with each other!”

“That sounds wonderful,” says Yaoyorozu, smiling and writing down the idea.

“Ibara?” says Kendo, turning to talk to her.

“Yes?” responds Ibara, carefully wiping her mouth and correcting her posture.

“Did you ask the teachers for permission to have Shinsou and Hatsume on our team?”

“I did,” begins Ibara. “I asked both Vlad King-senseis and both Power Loaders, and all of them agreed on both accounts. The only thing missing is the go ahead of the two people in question.”

She doesn’t say how one Vlad-sensei looked immensely relieved when she’d said that, and the other started rubbing his temples worriedly. She also doesn’t mention how both Power Loaders looked resigned to

their fates at her question. It doesn't seem polite to do so.

"We have a one man numeric advantage! Is that fair to the other UA?" asks Iida, accidentally knocking his glasses askew and pausing them to fix them.

"The teachers said it was to even the odds, since the other UA has more experience on this kind of thing."

The four of them nod, and go back to eating and idly chatting about plans for the UA war. Ibara goes out the door with good opinions of the Class A leader and second-in-command, and at least six different strategies on how to organize themselves in the war. She believes that in the next days they could create a few solid plans, so they would be able to execute them faster in the preparation days.

She is liking both their odds and the idea of the UA War better by the minute; that is her last thought as she enters the last class of the day before Heroics.

Hitoshi stands at the side, looking over the 1-A class as they talk among themselves in their costumes. It takes all of his effort to not feel inadequate in his normal PE uniform, but he manages.

Instead, he looks over all his future rivals. None of them seem to notice him, which is fine by him. It allows him to try and pick out possible weaknesses and memorize their appearance as much as he can.

He notices someone does know he's there. It's the guy he lost to in the Sports Festival, who sends him short glances every now and then, hesitating, and then turning back to talk to the rest of his group. Hitoshi wishes he would either make up his mind and say whatever he wants to say, or give up and leave him alone.

Footsteps come from the entrance passage of ground Theta, and the other class 1-A steps in. He immediately zeroes in on the shock of purple hair exactly like his own. He's… talking to the guy that he lost to. And for a second, Hitoshi could have sworn they were holding hands. He decides to ignore that and focus more on the hero costume

he's wearing.

It's a set of black armor with some purple accents, thin enough to hide below normal clothes and subtle enough to not raise suspicion at first glance. He's using a mouthpiece that has small interrogation sign on its right side, just below his ear.

He doesn't see a replica of Aizawa-sensei's capture weapon anywhere, so maybe he still isn't allowed to use it? Hitoshi spares a second to fervently wish to have his own capture weapon with him. Only a few more weeks and he would have been deemed skilled enough to use it in combat.

Hitoshi then remembers that his counterpart was supposed to have been transferred to the Hero course at the start of the second semester. If he had spent so much time training like a hero, it should be impossible for him not to have enough skill for the capture weapon. So, either he's wasting his time in the Hero course (stupidest thing he's ever heard), or he simply didn't choose that weapon at all.

His counterpart starts to walk towards him, and Hitoshi snaps out of his reverie. They both stare at each other as they get closer.

Hitoshi is slammed with a sudden wave of jealousy. It's illogical, he knows, to be jealous of himself. But seeing himself as who he wants to be, and knowing that just because of some senseless twist of fate he's not in his place it's enough to do away with some of his rationale.

Instead, Hitoshi swallows down the sentiment and grumbles: "What's your alias?"

"Con Man," he responds, taking a seat on a metal outcropping and gesturing for him to sit too.

There's a second of silence, where both of them try to think of what to say.

"Why?" slips out of Hitoshi's mouth.

"Why me, and not you?" answers Con Man. Right, he's also Hitoshi, of course he would know what his jealousy looks like.

"I just had one more chance to show what I'm made of than you, and in a situation much more suited for us than the Sports Festival," he responds, fiddling with his mouth guard. "And there was a free spot so they gave it to me."

“Free spot? What are you talking about?”

“See the guy with the purple balls in his hair?” Hitoshi scans the colorful crowd, and finds...

“The one who’s stuck staring at the frog girl’s ass?” he says with disgust.

“Yes. He got expelled, and I was next in line, so I got his spot.”

Hitoshi watches as the frog girl notices his starting and smacks him with his tongue hard enough to send him flying. The purple ball guy stops rolling, and stands up. He wipes his cheek with his hand, getting some of her saliva and goes to wipe it on the bandanna on his neck– Nevermind, he’s licking the saliva.

“How did he get expelled?” Hitoshi asks though he already kind of knows the answer.

“He kept getting distracted during class by the girls, so his class grades went down a lot. Then he failed the practical part of the Final Exam. His class grades weren’t enough to compensate and get him into the remedial training, so he got kicked out.”

There’s something Con Man’s not telling him, Hitoshi notices. He’s smirking in the way he does when he knows something nobody else knows. He’s glancing at the girl with the uniform that’s staying on by wishes and prayers, and the girl with to earphone jacks dangling from her ears with a look of gratefulness on his face.

Before Hitoshi can ask, two All Mights approach and everybody quiets down.

“We have two announcements to make!” starts the All Might without the red band. “Starting from now, teachers from the other timeline will be called by their hero aliases! Those who belong to this timeline will be called by their names! Please keep this in mind!”

All Might walks forward and states: “We now have another guest! Please, Shinsou Hitoshi, step forward!”

Oh crap. He thought he was ready for the 40+ stares on him. He was wrong. Don’t look nervous, don’t look nervous. Just walk towards the front.

Somebody snickers in the crowd. Hitoshi doesn’t know who it was,

doesn't even know if it was at him, but he welcomes the wave of spite that comes to him. It lets him look at all those people and not give a shit about them.

"Please, introduce yourself, Shinsou-shonen!" says Toshinori-sensei. Hitoshi has the sneaking suspicion that both of them are taking turns speaking.

"You already know my name. I come from General Studies, and I have the goal of being transferred into the Hero Course. I have no intention of making friends–"

Con Man snorts in the crowd. "Good luck with that," he says, before half-heartedly swatting electric guy's hand away from his hair, which is now sticking up even more because of static electricity.

Hitoshi forgets his train of thought, panics for a second, then simply continues with the usual polite stuff. All of them clap and he walks back to his other self.

"What was that about?" Hitoshi asks outright, glaring at him.

"That was me sparing you of weeks of trying and failing not to get attached to people. It's a lost cause."

Hitoshi doesn't think so. If anything, those words make him more determined. "Then I'll prove you wrong," he says.

Con Man looks surprised, then he seems to think about it for a second, and says "I'd like you to try," with a condescending smirk.

Hitoshi turns and stomps back to the people of his timeline, his face set in a stony mask.

"Shinsou-san!" calls the guy that moves like a robot. "I, in the name of the hero team, would like to extend to you the offer of joining our team in the upcoming UA War!"

"Sure," Hitoshi says and keeps walking, ignoring everything the other guy says.

He has a goal, and no one is going to keep him from it.

Prism is the first one to notice Eraserhead coming into the field. She greets him exuberantly, jumping up and down in place to make herself noticeable. “Hello sensei! What are we doing today? Are we fighting against each other again?”

“No,” he says and reaches into his sleeping bag. He then throws something big and green towards Prism.

She barely catches it, since it’s heavier than she imagined, and looks to see that she’s holding… a watermelon. With the name “Stanley” scribbled on it on both Japanese and English. What.

Eraserhead reaches inside the folds of his sleeping bag again and produces another watermelon, which he throws towards Sero.

“Today we’re playing capture the flag, UA vs UA. For those who don’t remember the rules, there are two territories, one for each team. Your objective is to get the rival’s “flag” out of their territory without being tagged.”

“Why is it a watermelon though,” asks Sero, making a harness out of his tape for the “flag”.

“A watermelon is approximately of the same hardness as a human head. Don’t break it,” says Eraserhead. Prism decides that holding the watermelon a bit more securely would be a great idea right about now.

“Yooo, can we eat it after the game’s over?” asks Feedback, and Prism can’t help but laugh. She has to admit that the idea sounds pretty nice!

Eraserhead looks at them in a perfect deadpan, but says nothing, so Prism takes that as a yes. Eraserhead then takes out a tablet and fiddles for a bit with it.

A glowing yellow stripe suddenly appears on the floor, stretching out to the sides of the field until Prism couldn’t see it anymore.

“The game starts now.”

…

Oh crap!

Prism quickly ducks under Ojiro's tail, barely sidesteps one of his punches, and runs away as fast as she can.

Temperance begins a duel against his double to get buy her some time. It's barely enough to get her into their own territory and pass the melon to Drug-runner, who uses her acid to get away faster than Prism ever could.

Prism, instead, decides to shadow the watermelon and wait for someone to try and get it so she can take them by surprise.

"Everybody follow Stanley!" says Shibari, who constructs a tape harness a lot like the one his counterpart did, but instead takes a bunch of leaves of a decorative bush nearby and makes a ball out of it, all while dodging metal pipes and electrical terminals at full speed. 'Shibari is so cool!' Prism decides and doubles her speed.

By the time she gets to the watermelon, practically everybody is there, some of them already looking battle-ruffled.

"The heroes retreated too, but don't get too confident," says Temperance, sporting a nasty bruise near the tip of his tail, almost as if someone stepped on it. Prism really wants to kiss it better!

"There's not enough time to plan," says Forgery, looking worried. Kingpin looks pretty much the same.

"So we just use a plan that's already made and wing it!" announces Dead Drop cheerfully, holding the watermelon with her pinkies raised so she won't make it float by accident. It looks really cute! "I vote for divide-and-conquer!"

"Please keep in mind you don't need to fight your counterparts, just whoever you think you could win against, ok? Tell the others of the plan," says Forgery.

"And keep the watermelon moving, Eraserhead never said anything against doing that, so we should take advantage of it," remarks Kingpin.

Everybody nods, and then all of them are off.

A handful of seconds later, Prism is almost knocked over by a running Sato. She double-checks that he's the Sato of the opposite team, and makes her way to higher terrain, where she can spot a stack of loose metal pipes. She watches Sato make his way, pausing to look around.

Prism measures the distance carefully, waits a second to be sure, then makes the metal pipes roll off the roof she's in and fall directly over Sato.

He has barely enough time to try and block the pipes with his arms, unable to hide the hiss of pain he lets out. He then look towards where Prism is, and downs a packet of sugar in one go.

He starts running deeper into villain territory, and Prism knows she has no hope of ever being as fast as him on sugar, so instead she takes one of the remaining pipes and throws it as his feet. It doesn't hit, but it does produce a really loud clang. That should do it.

Sato doubles his speed, which makes him unable to notice the newly-sprayed acid on the floor. He trips and falls, and Drug-runner lets out a happy: "Yatta!"

Prism runs as fast as she can, and taps Sato on the head, effectively tagging him.

"You guys got me good," he says, standing up to rub at his arms. The acid is not of the potent kind, so aside from some bruises, he's perfectly fine! Prism's happy about that!

Prism then remembers something which makes her giggle and whirl around to face Drug-runner.

"We did it, babe!" enthuses Prism, striking a cute victory pose.

"We sure did, cutie!" She does a cute pose of her own. Prism spots crossed fingers on her left hand. Drug-runner's plan is go!

They both burst out laughing, and lean into each other. Prism decides to circle her arms around Drug-runner's shoulders, and Drug-runner does the same with her waist, pulling each other closer. Prism glances away shily, and leans in for a quick kiss. Prism finds Drug-runner tastes like cherry lip-gloss and leaves her lips tingling like when she eats a lot of pineapple.

The both pull back, and Prism can feel herself blushing incredibly red, not that anybody would be able to see it. Drug-runner's in the same position, but Prism can only tell because she's so very close.

Prism pulls back with a slightly nervous laugh and steals a glance towards Sato, who's staring at both of them in bafflement. He blinks and looks away when she notices her looking.

Drug-runner gently tugs Prism a few steps away from him. She leans in and whispers in her ear: “Think we sold the performance?”

“Definitely!” says Prism, if the way her heart’s beating is any indication. “I wouldn’t mind doing this with you again!”

Drug-runner laughs and kisses Prism’s cheek, then says “I’ll go set more traps, why don’t you go set up an ambush?”

Prism nods, and both of them run in opposite directions after one last hug. Prism can’t help but smile dumbly for a good chunk of the way.

She doesn’t know how she’ll survive putting into action Drug-runner’s fake dating plan, since it’s the first time she tries it, and she’s already gotten a bit too attached.

Drug-runner’s affectionate smile flashes through Prism’s head, and she giggles.

Oh, well, she’ll figure something out!

As soon as Katsuki gets that damn watermelon out of enemy territory, he’s blowing it up sky-high.

That is the mantra that keeps him going through this bullshit exercise, blasting at top speed from metal building to metal building.

He doesn’t like running away from anyone, but he’ll be damned if he loses this thing, so he maneuvers away from Shibari’s tape and Tank’s thrown metal pipes, tearing his way towards Nightmare and Dark Shadow, who are holding the stupid thing.

A metal pipe passes stupidly close to his head, so he suddenly drops out of the sky and makes the point to kick Tank off the building he’s on. He was hardened, so that wouldn’t get him kicked out of the fight.

He gets a strand of tape stuck to his elbow for his troubles, which he burns with extreme prejudice and goes back to chasing after bird-brain, who’s absolutely no– fucking– where to be found.

Fuck everything.

Instead he sees the shitty knock-off Deku, that Kingpin fuck, standing on a balcony. He starts sparking green and jumps towards Katsuki. Like hell he'd let himself be tagged by this loser, so he uses his explosions to jump sideways.

"Out of my fucking way!" screams Katsuki, trying to kick him in the head, but this fucker is faster than Deku, so he misses. Kingpin then does like, five different feints consecutively, so when the real punch comes he has to jump into the wall. It hurts like hell.

That's it. The nerd's going down.

Katsuki unleashes a flash-bang Kingpin's not able to avoid, and then surges forward in a cloud of smoke, aiming a right hook towards his face.

Kingpin jumps back blindly, getting out of the path of the hit, but slamming painfully into a nearby metal wall. Katsuki takes the opening and aims another hit towards him. Kingpin does a twisting somersault, which gets lets him avoid the main hit, but it isn't enough to get him out of the line of fire. Katsuki aims his other hand towards him.

"Die!" screams Katsuki.

Kingpin rolls away from the explosion, only a few minor burns on him. He stands up, idly wiping some soot off his cheek.

"Is 'die' really all you can say, Katsuki?"

"Shut the fuck up, you worthless piece of shit!"

Kingpin suddenly goes very still. He looks at Katsuki in the eye, his irises glowing acid green from his Quirk.

"Worthless?" he says, in an eerily calm voice, straightening up slowly.

"What, are you fucking deaf too?"

Kingpin bursts forward, aiming a kick towards Katsuki's face, which changes at the last second to an elbow to his ribs. Katsuki dodges aside, aiming one of his hands towards him, but Kingpin's faster, reaching out to tag Katsuki, which forces him to jump aside once again.

This time when Kingpin comes in close for a hit, he unleashes a full-

force explosion towards him. Kingpin only has time to cover his face.

Katsuki hears something above him and turns to look. At least a dozen of metal pipes falling from a nearby roof are coming directly towards him. Katsuki realizes that Kingpin maneuvered him into that position just so that his explosion would send the pipes raining down.

Katsuki uses the burst of anger he feels at the realization to fuel an explosion big enough to blast the metal away. The sneaky fuck catches one of the metal pipes and uses it like a bat, coming straight towards Katsuki.

Then Kingpin freezes, and drops the pipe, completing the swing as a punch. It would have been a effective feint it the idiot hadn't frozen before trying to do it. It allows Katsuki to make one last explosion, which sends Kingpin careening into a low-hanging pipe headfirst. There's a metallic thud, and he collapses, clutching his head.

"Pathetic," says Katsuki, smirking at the crumpled form of Kingpin.

A shout snaps him out of his gloating, and he looks to his left to see Deku, running with the opposite team's watermelon. He's being chased by Overdose, and by the looks of his muscles he's definitely on a sugar-high. From the other side of the field, way too fucking close to them, is Forgery, barreling down with *their* watermelon in her hands. Oh fuck no. He is not gonna lose to someone more intelligent than smart, and someone whose name he can't even remember.

Katsuki aims one last explosion towards Kingpin to keep him from getting up, since he's still too concussed to dodge it. He uses the impulse of that explosion to knock into Overdose and send careening off his path. Without having to worry about getting slammed by Overdose, Deku can finally concentrate on running, and his speed is obviously better than ponytail chick's.

"Victory for the heroes!" calls All Might, or Toshinori, Katsuki has no idea and honestly doesn't care. Instead, he goes up one of the watermelons, and crushes it under foot until red sprays everywhere.

"NOOOO!" yells Feedback, the villain electro dolt. "We could have eaten it! Why are you so heartless."

"Don't worry!" says Tank, the other shitty hair. "We still have the other one!" Katsuki notices Feedback and Tank both have crossed fingers. What are they–

“Oh right, thanks bro!” says Feedback and pecks Tank’s lips. Katsuki freezes … he doesn’t know what he’s feeling, but it’s making him feel violent and sad at the same time. He responds the only way he knows how.

“Fuck off you two idiots!” And proceeds to walk away.

“Who knows, we might!” Tank calls out.

‘Ok, what the fuck is even going on anymore?!?’ thinks Katsuki and stomps back to the ground’s entrance, where things make more sense and he doesn’t feel like punching shit until his hand breaks

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“Ok, how many fingers do I have up?”

“Two.”

“What was the last class we had?”

“We had math with Cementoss. Forgery, I’m fine, really,” Kingpin says from where he’s sitting on the ground.

Forgery can see that his eyes sometimes unfocus and his responses are coming half a second too slow for it to be normal, so excuse her for not believing him.

“Kingpin, Izuku, you can’t keep doing this. We want to help you, but we won’t know how if you don’t tell us what’s wrong,” she says, helping him stand up slowly. Sparkle had already gone to call Recovery Girl, thankfully.

“I’m sorry,” he says, letting out a sigh and fully leaning on her. “I just– I’ve had worse and I’m fine, so things like this don’t seem worth bothering others for.”

Forgery doesn’t know what made Izuku like this, but each time it happens it breaks her heart. She shakes her head and simply concentrates in getting Kingpin into a spot easier for Recovery Girl to reach. While they’re walking, a thought pops into her head.

“Why did you throw the match against Bakugou?” asks Forgery,

stroking her thumb over Kingpin's hand. "I know that if you'd continued the swing with that pipe it would have broken his arm. That would have given you enough time to tag him. You've done similar things before, so why not now?"

"Because they don't know that," answers Kingpin curtly. "Their Izuku hasn't realized what he's capable of and I don't want him to know that."

There's something in it that clues Forgery on the hidden part of the problem. "Izuku… do you regret ever becoming Kingpin?

He pauses in thoughtful silence, his lips moving silently.

"...I don't think so. I mean, it's not very comfortable knowing of how… villainous I'm capable of being. Of knowing just how far I can go. But... it's better than finding that out in the middle of a real battle by doing something I would regret."

Forgery smiles, and squeezes Kingpin's hand affectionately. She spies Con Man talking to his double. Well, more like arguing about something. They stop when they see her arrive. Shinsou then asks Con Man something in a lower tone, but he must have underestimated the acoustics of the place because Forgery can hear every word.

"Before you leave, I'd like to ask you a question. Did the green-haired guy ever tell you how he undid our brainwashing? All I got out of him was 'I wanted to win really hard'," Shinsou asks.

"Oh, he said he had a specific thought process in his brain that boosted his adrenaline into high enough levels to disregard the signals and soundwaves of outside voices." Shinsou stares at Con Man. "I asked Hatsume, she just said it's a smart way of saying 'I wanted to win really hard'."

Forgery glances towards Kingpin, who looks at her with a sheepish, but unapologetic expression. She shakes her head and says: "Con Man, could you lend me a hand?" Forgery knows her strength, though adequate, is not enough to support most of Kingpin's weight for long periods of time.

He nods and walks over, taking Kingpin's other arm and leaning over to peck her lips. Hitoshi stares at them, before shaking his head and walking away, muttering something about that sounds a lot like 'inevitable'.

The three of them laugh the whole way to the infirmary.

Izuku was nervous a he walked into the room, contrasting the bright smile that Kingpin had. It was the first time he got to talk with *both* All Mights at the same time!. It was a fangasm just to *picture it* .

Kingpin instead goes up to All Might and says:
“Rememberthebattlefromyesterday?
Wellsomethingreallyweirdhappenedand–”

“Slow it down, my boy,” chuckles All Might, ruffling his hair with a fond smile.

“What he meant to say,” says Deku, going up to both of them, vibrating with excitement. “Is that last time we fought, something strange happened. We, for some reason, saw each other’s memories!”

“That’s very interesting,” says Toshinori, putting a hand to his chin thoughtfully. “There has never been two wielders of One for All. Copies don’t truly count, since they’d only be copying the Quirk and part of the stored power, not all of it.”

“Have you been able to replicate this?” asks All Might.

“We thought it would be kinda dangerous, so we waited until we could tell both of you,” says Deku, taking out a notebook out of his bag and going over the notes he took after the fact.

“Can we try?” asks Kingpin, grabbing his own notebook and placing it beside Deku’s, open on the same page.

“I’ll notify Recovery Girl,” says Toshinori, taking out his phone and beginning the call.

“What do you think triggered it?” asks Deku.

“I think it was either the blood or the skin-to-skin contact with One for All active,” answers Kingpin. “I’m not entirely sure.”

“One way to find out,” Deku says, grabbing a pocket knife out of his bag and setting it on a table nearby. “First skin-to-skin, and then

blood?"

"Sure!" answers Kingpin, taking off his school jacket and re-tying his red band around his neck.

"All is ready to go, my boys!" says Toshinori, while All Might moves two chairs for both of them to sit in.

"On the count of three?" says Kingpin, starting to spark green, his eyes glowing with excitement and energy.

"One," says Deku, activating his Quirk too.

"Two," Says Kingpin as he raises his palm to his counterpart.

"Three!" They both call out as they touch eeeaa–

They're walking along an empty street, everything too quiet to be natural.

"I-If we keep going straight, All Might will probably be waiting for us. We should take a detour–."

"Why should we run away? I'd definitely be better if we beat him up!"

"W-We should avoid combat if we can no matter what!"

"We'll toy with him until it's almost over, and then when he's tired out, I'll beat him up!"

'It's really hard for me to deal with Kacchan' thinks Izuku, letting him walk on for a moment. 'But I can't think about that right now.'

He begins to run, and shouts: "Who do you think All Might is? Even with the handicap, you can't win against him!"

Kacchan rears his hand back and hits Izuku in the face, hard enough to send him flying. He stops, clutching his nose, fearing that it could be broken.

"Don't say another word … Just because things are going better for you doesn't mean you should talk. It's pissing me off.

"Wait, Kacchan! I'm saying this so we can pass the test! Listen, Kacchan!"

"I told you, your power isn't needed to pass–"

"Stop yelling! This is why we can never have a real conversation!"

A blast of air tears everything around them, and Izuku can't tell which direction is up or down amidst all the debris and–

Kingpin snaps out of the memory, blinking away the feeling of being in two places at once. The memory itself… he remembers his Final Exam very differently than what he just saw.

He glances towards Deku, whose eyes are glossy and unfocused, limp in his seat. It does look kind of eerie, like he's looking at a very life-like doll and not another person. Kingpin wonders why his flashback is longer than his.

"So, how was it?" asks Toshinori, as Kingpin checks that everything's ok with him. All Might hands him his notebook and pen, and Kingpin answers with a cheerful "Thanks!" and begins writing in it.

Deku stirs and blinks, shaking his head.

"Welcome back!" Kingpin said with a friendly smile. "You were out a bit longer than me, so I got started writing already. So it looks like–"

"You liar."

Kingpin froze at those words. He looks up confused, but still grinning.

"You … you planned *everything* . The misdirection, the match, the votes–" As Deku went on, Kingpin dropped his smile.

"Shit, forgot that info was also up for grabs. And it was such an interesting experiment too. Oh well." Kingpin calmly starts to pack his things. Deku's eyes widen.

"I'm going to tell them! I'm going to out you for what you are!" Deku almost yells. All Might and Toshinori, on the other hand, start to sweat in worry and confusion respectively.

At this Kingpin smirks. "Oh yes, tell them. With all that 'information' and 'proof' you've acquired. Do tell them where you got it from!" Kingpin remarks with air quotations.

"… What?" Deku looks confused.

"Oh right, let me give you a demonstration." Kingpin clears his throat, and then starts talking in a bright and cheerful voice. "'Hey guys, Kingpin is lying! I learned about it by getting visions when we

touched! Yeah, my Quirk's only strength enhancement, why do you ask?" He drops the cheerful voice and goes back to his casual one.

Deku's eyes widen. "My Quirk told me … but–"

"But it's a se-cret-Quirk." He says, stressing the syllables like he's explaining to a child. "We both know that we're good at hiding information. But when it comes to outright lying?" He laughs coldly, picking up his notebook and pen.

"Don't you realize it? You have no way of telling the others of what they're up against without letting down All Might. Your hands are tied. This time, you can't do *anything.* "

Deku froze at that.

"Thanks for the help, All Mights! I'm afraid we won't be trying this again until after the UA War! Sorry for taking up your time," Kingpin says, bowing low.

Kingpin turns, walking away confidently. Deku sees him pull out his phone and logging into a chat named "hero class villains", before he rounds a corner and disappears from view.

Deku looked down at his hands. *'I like Deku, it's got a you can do it vibe.'*

He starts to clench them tightly. *'From now on, Deku is the name of a hero!'*

Deku grits his teeth together. ' *What's your name?'*

The boy unconsciously activates his power. *"Someone told me that there's a different meaning to the name, that I* can *do it.'*

"Since when … did he forget WHO WE ARE!" Deku grabs his bag and slams the door behind him, shattering the glass … he reopens the door. "Sorry about the glass!" And closes it again.

The two former Number Ones look on, slightly in confusion, mostly in shock. "So … what now?" says Toshinori, numbly beginning to pick up the pieces of glass.

"We wait, see what those two come up with, and guide them to the best of our abilities," All Might says and goes to get the trash can in the corner of the room. "You have tomorrow after first period free,

right?”

Toshinori nods, letting the glass clink on the bottom of the trash can.

“There’s a video I think you should see.”

A Chance Gained

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Notes

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Assault looks on as the rest of the 1-A villains enters the common room of their building from where he's leaning on a back wall.

He watches carefully, noting Dead Drop's confused expression, Animal's worried one, or Feedback's apprehensive one, among many others. Nobody knows exactly why they're here, since Kingpin just texted "curtain's coming loose", which is the code for "Civil War understatement compromised".

Speaking of Kingpin, he's on the far wall of the common room, generic furniture pushed away to make room for a sprawling planning board. It's not orderly or easy to follow, by any means, but compared to how it was in the Civil War, it's a huge improvement.

Overdose is the last to arrive, munching on some strawberry cake, and the session begins.

Kingpin caps his marker and sets it aside, and turns to face them. His hands are covered in colorful smudges from using them as erasers.

"I'm sorry," he says coming towards the center. "Izuku saw something he shouldn't have and found some of our little plans. He knows the truth." Everyone in the room tensed.

"Ha, I knew you'd fuck it up first." Kingpin glared at Powerhouse's smug grin for a second. "Give me my money." Tank hands 550 yen to–

"Wait, you made BETS!" Kingpin screamed.

"Well yeah, I put 1200 on Feedback fucking it up fist." Said PR, causing the electric teen to splutter in outrage.

"I still can't believe I lost 2300! I thought for sure Hacker would spill

her plans first," Sero groaned, getting a glare from the gadget girl.

"Weren't we going to do that anyways? You know, reveal how crazy the Civil War was before the UA War?" says Prism, perched on a desk.

"Correct, Prism!" begins Crusade. "Even if we are the villains, it would have defeated the purpose of the exercise if the heroes wouldn't have had a fighting chance!" Crusade had been very insistent on that fact, Assault remembers. Kingpin had agreed, since a lot of people weren't comfortable with just curbstomping their unsuspecting selves.

"Yes, that was the plan," says Forgery, while Sparkle takes out his phone with a flourish and begins to take pictures of Kingpin's new ideas and sending them to the group chat. "But the idea had been to control said reveal, drop just enough hints here and there for them to piece the picture two or three days before the exercise."

"This is just a complete loss of the element of surprise," Con Man grouches and slams his head on the desk, groaning.

"We should run damage control before the news reach the rest of the hero team," Assault says, passing Con Man his thermos full of coffee. Con Man takes it and begins to take sips, his eye-bags a touch darker than normal.

"Not necessarily," says Kingpin.

"Whaaaa–" says Feedback, his eyes comically wide. "Who are you and what have you done with Kingpin?"

"Don't be so dramatic Feedback!" says Dead Drop excitedly. "I'm sure Dek– whoops, Kingpin has a reason for that!"

Kingpin smiles, two dimples forming on his cheeks. "Thank you, DD! I I used my *piece* , so I can assure that Deku won't be able to tell any of the heroes outright what he knows!"

It's in these kinds of moments that Assault is extremely glad he had joined the villains in the Civil War. All of the heroes look different shades of baffled, nervous and horrified. The only reason the villains don't share their sentiment is because they know Kingpin would never turn against them. Ever.

"That means he's going to be the one to carry out the Fighting Chance plan, isn't he?" says Singularity, his mismatched eyes staring straight into Kingpin's own. "If he can't state what we've done outright, that

means he can only drop hints here and there, the same thing we were going to do."

"A bit more thoroughly than we would have done it, but essentially? Yes," Kingpin responds, tossing the marker to PR, who catches it with her earphone jacks and sets it in the box with the other markers.

"One less thing to worry about," says Assault, and with that, the meeting's over … and he owes Powerhouse 2300 yen. Not a good way to start the day.

He stands up and joins everyone to go to Kayama-sensei's class.

There a few suspicious clanking sounds coming from the distance, but Assault shrugs them off. It wouldn't be the first time a Support project went wrong. He just hopes it wasn't one of Hacker's. Those tend to have… *peculiar* outcomes.

Chunks of metal were strewn along the ground, warped beyond recognition. Torn circuits sparked intermittently, dangerously close to puddles of water. What had once been the head of a mecha was now stuck on one of the fake water towers nearby, like somebody had decided to stick the piece of machinery on it like a hat. The remains of a house caved in the distance, finally done in by the ice-covered robot arm crushed on top of it.

Aizawa looked over at his students, shivering with fear and cold. Some of them badly hurt, others just needing a heat blanket. Thankfully, none of them were too tired for Recovery Girl's healing, having been taken out of the battle too quickly for it to matter.

The last of the second and third years who came to help were already leaving for their own classes, yet still sent nervous glances towards the two Hatsumes being chewed out by Power Loader.

Aizawa sighs. They should have known that the Hatsumes wouldn't resist the temptation of building a giant robot.

"I know we just had to deal with *this,* " Aizawa says, more than one student flinching at the mention of what just happened. "So the

Principal and Eraserhead have decided to change the Heroics Class activity we had for today. It'll be mostly a mental challenge."

Kaminari started to mumble 'no more thinking' over and over, Drug-runner joined the chant sounding far too chipper for the situation. Feedback doesn't join in since he's helping Pirate Radio and Jirou dig their earphone jacks out of a clump of fast-hardening foam. The amount of curses all three of them are saying should have earned them detention for a week, but the situation merits it, so he'll let it slide.

"We will divide the teams so they have an even amount of analytical-minded people." The Sparkle says something in French, which probably is "what a relief", before dramatically flopping down on Assault's lap, who starts fanning him with one of his hands. He keeps muttering something about whips, and the Hatsumes' twisted mind, and since he was the one that got shoved into the robot's hidden compartment, Aizawa resolves not to ask. His team would have one of the Midoriyas for sure, just to make up for the mental strain that event caused.

"The physical portions are also balanced based on your teams," Aizawa continues. Mineta, Con Man, and Shinsou all sighed in relief.

"Um, sir." Forgery raised her hand. "What's going to happen to Hatsume and Hacker?" she asked worriedly.

"She and her counterpart will have in-school suspension for the next 2 days," says Ectoplasm as he walks by Kouda, who was giving Shiozaki some hot chocolate.

"Wait, where's Dead Drop?" asks Dart. A second later said girl falls through the ceiling. Aizawa noted to pair her with one of the Bakugous for getting that injury. Speaking of the Bakugous seem to be coming down from their adrenaline high, which means they're safe enough to bring inside.

From then on, the incident known as 'Mechapocalypse' was now a forbidden subject among the entirety of U.A.

Fukidashi Manga really, really wished he had gotten another team for this exercise.

He had walked into the room he had been assigned to, only to hear Monoma say: “Finally! Someone who isn’t disgusting!” and walk towards him with his insane gloating expression. Where was Kendo when you needed her?

Manga listened with half an ear to Monoma’s rant while he looked at the rest of the room. There was not much to see, admittedly. Blank walls, white floors, no windows. It was practically empty except for a wide, circular pedestal in the center, which Manga recognized as a touch-screen computer.

His other teammates were the 1-A pervert (Why. Why did it have to be him? At least there weren’t any girls in the team, so he wouldn’t be distracted), the villain explosive guy and the villain’s leader. The last two were in opposite corners of the room, glaring at each other.

Great.

The console in the center of the room beeped and a set of instructions appeared on its surface.

“Two teams of five will face against each other, each in their own rooms,” began to read the villain’s leader, or “Kingpin” as it said in the list of names of their team.

“This exercise will consist of two phases, each of them with–”

“Hurry the fuck up!” screams Powerhouse right beside Manga, which kinda left his ears ringing. Kingpin grit his jaw and looked up from the console.

“You shouldn’t interrupt, we could learn valuable information,” he says with a glare and then proceeds to completely ignore Powerhouse’s’ screaming rant. He’s silent for a second, so Manga thinks he’s lost the place where he stopped reading, but then he says:

“Okay, so the gist of the exercise is this. We’ll get a question related to Heroics from the other team, and we’ll have some time to answer it. If we don’t answer it in time, the other team will get access to the remote-controlled weapons hidden in this room and attack us. If we manage to answer the question correctly, we then get to ask a question to the other team, if they don’t answer we’ll get to attack them. The team whose members are eliminated first loses.”

...Okay so he reads really fast. Good to know, Manga supposes.

“So we’ll win in no time!” says Mineta, perched like a monkey from the controller, too small to see it if he stands on the ground. “The Midoriyas know so much hero trivia it’s scary!”

“How fitting for class 1-A to think just useless facts the most important part of Heroic Theory!” says Monoma with an air of superiority that Manga knows to be pure bullshit.

The console pings, and a question writes itself on the surface.

‘Why was it decided that the Police Force wouldn’t be able to use their Quirks?’

“What!?! This doesn’t have anything to do with Heroics!” cries out Mineta, throwing his hands in the air.

The console beeps twice and turns red, the one minute they have for answering the question suddenly drops to 45 seconds.

“So that was wrong,” says Manga, fully aware that he’s stating the obvious. He doesn’t know the answer or what else to say, so sue him.

“That one is easy!” says Monoma. “The government thought it would be easier to regulate the usage of Quirks in fewer people than the thousands of police agents in Japan!”

The console beeps once, half of the screen turning green. Their time doesn’t get cut, so Manga supposes that means the answer was correct, but there are things missing in it.

“... I think I know,” says Kingpin tapping the screen absently. “Being a Pro Hero is not just being a public servant and saving people. It’s also a business. The Pro Heroes of the time pushed for the Police Force being unable to use their Quirks so they could have a sort of… monopoly on Quirk usage, and use that as a way of attracting fans, and by consequence, money.”

The consoled beeped again and turned completely green before a text-box appeared to write the next question.

“Well, that was depressing,” said Manga, a sweat-drop appearing on the speech-bubble he had for a head. It then changes to a question mark, and Manga says: “Why don’t we ask them about the influence pre-Quirk fictional heroes had on Pro Heroes?”

“Great idea from one of our own members.” Says Monoma with a haughty attitude. “I’ll type it in now.” Monoma reaches over, asking ‘What influences did fictional heroes have on Quirk users during the year 2030’.

“Why the hell did you pick 2030? Heroes weren’t until 2038, moron,” snarked Powerhouse.

“Well it actually makes sense. While Pro Heroes weren’t around yet, people still felt a duty to use Quirks for the greater good and became vigilantes. Most of the early vigilantes were teenagers and young adults inspired by the stories they grew up with. Because the government saw that, they began to regulate the profession so kids wouldn’t be the ones doing the work.” Everyone stared in silence at Mineta with simultaneous flat and curious looks. “I get good grades!”

“See, even the minuscule pervert of 1-A sees our greatness.” Kingpin, Powerhouse, and Manga all twitched (The last one with an anime popped-vein anger symbol etched onto the side of his head) while Mineta slumped.

“Just send the damn question already!” said Powerhouse, and without waiting for their agreement, he punched the send button.

Kingpin looked like he wanted to snark at Powerhouse for doing something like that, but the last second he turned away and breathed in and out slowly and deliberately. “I think we should use the time the other team has to answer the question to think of the next one.”

Manga gave him a thumbs up. There were times like this he liked Pony’s suggestion of using his head for emojis. Still, sometimes he activated his Quirk completely by accident and suddenly a crying face emoji sprayed water everywhere. That’s one of the reasons 1-B has a mop every room they go to. 1-A never questioned it, but Manga’s class never questioned their rubber sandals either.

“Fuck this is boring. Why don’t we ask them something about fighting? I doubt anyone other than myself or Tank gets it,” Kingpin and Monoma sent him glares at that declaration.

“I say we ask them about the structure of UA,” suggests The 1-B copycat.

“Or we could ask about dangers of vigilantism,” suggests Kingpin, as Powerhouse starts to growl.

Before a fight can break out, the console beeps three times, and the surface turns into the footage of a room identical to the one they're in. Apparently, the other team still had twenty seconds to answer their question. They could make out Feedback as being part of the other team, but everyone else was just a black silhouette.

"Why can't we see any of the girls?" The pervert asked with tears in his eyes.

"Looks like we see one member every time," observes Kingpin. He reaches out to the console to tap at it. Six different lists of five weapons appear on it's surface, each with their own colors.

"So, we have to choose our weapons!" says Monoma. Manga leans over and notices that all of the lists have a really good weapon, and a nearly useless one on them.

"The white list has a taser, Feedback's on the other team, I think we shouldn't pick that one," says Manga, Kingpin shakes his head and begins trying to talk.

"We take the right one damn it!" interrupts Powerhouse, going to press the red list without asking. Again.

"If you'd let me finish you'd know red isn't the color we need, it's green!" says Kingpin, swatting away his hand. Powerhouse simply swings his arm towards Kingpin, and both of them *begin fighting in the middle of the exercise.*

"I suggest we take the blue, because you 1-As are usually wrong," snarks Monoma.

"Guys, we have five seconds left!" says Mineta.

'Fuck my life,' thinks Manga.

Izuku meant it when he said he was going to beat Kingpin. Deku means 'you can do it!' after all! He doesn't go back on his word!

But… he doesn't know *how* to do it.

He'd been very distracted during the whole exercise, trying to think of when to say what, and how to say it and how much to reveal and…

If he hadn't guessed that one of the Iida's was on the other team and stopped asking things that could be found on a textbook, his team would have lost.

"Deku, did you hear?" asks Uraraka, entering the common room with a spring in her step. Iida follows her, a blooming bruise on his cheek from where Izuku had shot him with a peashooter in the exercise.

"Kingpin and Powerhouse started fighting in the middle of the exercise! I was on the other team, and I thought they were someone else since those two were blacked out, but then the exercise ended and Powerhouse threw Kingpin out of the room. Apparently Kingpin broke his nose!," she said animatedly, yet still with a touch of disbelief.

Izuku blinked. An idea started forming in his head, and he realized that Kingpin had accidentally given him the key to making it work.

"That's weird, I wonder what happened in the Civil War for those two to hate each other so much," said Izuku, with genuine curiosity and apprehension in his voice.

"It does beg the question," said Iida, putting a hand on his chin quizzically. "Wasn't Powerhouse the Paragon in that war?"

"Yeah, and the only way I could see Kacchan being that angry is if he had lost the war pretty badly."

"The heroes losing? But… didn't they say that the villains had been outnumbered?" Iida asked.

"I wouldn't have taken you as such a good villain leader," says Uraraka, slightly mystified at the possibility.

"Neither did I…" says Izuku, unable to hide a note of apprehension in his tone.

Uraraka and Iida exchange concerned glances.

"What's wrong, Deku?" asks Uraraka, seating herself closer to Izuku. 'Okay, this will either make or break the plan,' thinks Izuku. 'Say the truth, omit details, don't look to suspicious.'

"It's just… there's something *weird* about Kingpin, I can't put my

finger on what. I'm not exactly sure how to put it into words..." trails of Izuku, searching for the right words to say.

"I can understand. A different event can cause different branches of personality and behavior. Seeing yourself act in such a manner can be disorienting. Don't worry, I'm sure you could get used to it after a while though. It's only a small change, after all." Iida says with enthusiasm.

"If you're sure," says Izuku, but doesn't bother hiding his doubt at it. His plan hasn't failed exactly, but if he wants it to work, he'll have to continue pointing out the inconsistencies.

An idea pops into his mind, this time completely his own.

"Um, Iida, could I help you guys with the planning for the UA War?" says Izuku hopefully. "I promise I can help a lot!"

"I don't see why not, though I will have to ask Kendo for her agreement!" says Iida, nodding furiously. "However! I think she would include someone else from 1-B in the planning to keep things balanced!"

Izuku thanks him, internally letting out a sigh of relief. He looks over to Uraraka, who's staring at Dead Drop walking by outside the window. "Hey guys, I need to go talk to my double about some stuff. See you guys later?" she asks.

"It's fine, I actually need to discuss something with Aizawa-sensei too," Izuku says, staring curiously at Uraraka's flustered expression. She bows curtly and leaves.

"I will then take my leave! The answer to your offer of help will be given to you after this meeting!" says Iida, and the group says their see you laters.

Izuku walked to the teacher's lounge, juggling ideas and mentally going through the rules. For now, he'd work on evening the field. Both classes needed to work together if they wanted to even have a chance of winning. The heroes needed to be made aware of the threat the villains posed. Izuku also knew Iida; his plans, although good ones, were predictable and that against himself would be a huge weakness.top

However, he couldn't just focus on weaknesses. What they sorely needed was an edge, something that could keep the villains on their

toes. The Mechapocalypse had reminded him of something, and he needed to know if he would be stopped before he could put it in practice. Hence, looking for Aizawa-sensei.

‘If this works,” he thought, raising a hand to knock on the door. ‘I might have found the way to win this.’

Bridges Built and Burnt

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Notes

> Anything Stampede or Pony say that is in italics, it's meant to be in English.
>
> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

The cafeteria was loud with the sound of chatting and gossip, packed to the brim with students moving around. As much as Drug-runner liked the place, eating outside had become one of her favorite parts of the day. Laying down on the grass after finishing a meal was fun, play-wrestling with her friends even more so.

It was also fun to see Larceny climb up trees and eat apples for the sole purpose of “accidentally” throwing them at 1-A. From the outside, it looked as if he was being petty, but everybody had made a game of seeing how many of the apple cores they could catch, and then feed to Nightmare. When Nightmare had said he liked apples, Drug-runner hadn’t thought it meant eating the *entire* apple, but now she had seen him peck apple cores out of mid-air and eat them in a few bites.

Speaking of bites. And apples.

“Powerhouse, pass me an apple!” Drug-runner shouts. Powerhouse looks very annoyed, and pauses getting his food in order to throw an apple at her, full strength.

She catches it flawlessly, throws it up and down to boast a bit, and takes a huge bite. “Thanks, Blasty!” she says, wiping juice from her face with the back of her hand.

Powerhouse looks at her with an expression Drug-runner can’t decipher, before turning back to getting food. “Don’t eat like a pig,” he says, just as loudly as ever, but lacking any kind of bite. He also refuses to look at her. Weird.

“Drug-runner! Yo, Druggie!” says Graffiti– no wait, he doesn’t have

the red band on, that's Awase. "Kayama-sensei says she wants to see you!"

"What for?" she says.

"She said it was something to do with the UA War, don't ask me what though," he finishes and smiles at her, before going to the back of the lunch line.

"Huh. Powerhouse, could you take my food and save me a spot? Thanks!" she says, and shoves the lunch tray at him. He takes it with a few insults and stomps out the door.

Drug-runner decides to take advantage of the lack of Iidas to reprimand her and runs the entire way to Kayama-sensei's office. She knocks on the door breathlessly, and lets herself in.

Midnight is grading papers, and by the amount of red in her counterpart's essay things are not going to go well for her. Though since Drug-runner's not from this timeline and not getting grades because of it, it means that she wants to talk about something else.

"Kayama-sensei? Am I in trouble?" Drug-runner says, pulling out a chair and seating herself. Kayama moves aside the papers and smirks at her question. She places a slip of crumpled paper on the table, and says "You tell me."

Laying on the table is what Drug-runner recognizes as her fake dating plan, with all of the signatures of the villains of 1-A *and* 1-B. Fuck. "Oh, this? It's just, uh, um" … She should ask Midor– Kingpin for tips on this. After a few seconds she sighed. "It's matchmaking," she mumbled.

"... Matchmaking?"

"Yes!" Drug-runner said, standing up to rant her confession with enthusiasm. "This is HIGH SCHOOL dang it! We're so focused on being heroes we can't spend ONE DAY just sitting down and talking about the romance of ANYONE! The only ones who got ANY form of romance is Kingpin and his group, because of the freaking CIVIL WAR! I'm using this opportunity, to make sure EVERYONE has an opportunity, nay, the PLEASURE, to date! NO EXCEPTIONS!!!" Drug-runner sat back down, panting after her long rant.

"What makes you think 'this' will give some people a date?" asks Kayama-sensei, raising a single eyebrow at her.

“Have you *huff* seeeeen this classss *huff*? There’s enough *huff* sexual tension for *huff* a single spark to set them off,” she said out of breath. She the gulped and looked up sheepishly. “I’m not in trouble, am I?”

Kayama-sensei waved her hand as if swatting a fly. “Don’t worry, Nedzu warned us in advance that something like this might happen.” Drug-runner let out a sigh of relief. “I’m just giving you a warning.”

“A warning?” Drug-runner asked with concern.

“Yes. Forming new relationships is delicate, and an activity like this could cause questions in sexuality, heartbreak with rejection and disappointment with what they thought was real, and ended up being nothing more than pretend on the other person’s part. These things can blow up without warning on the field, turning a normal mission into a difficult situation,” Kayama-sensei explained.

“R-really?” Drug-runner asked with a slight stutter.

“Yeah. I went to confirm this with your teachers too. When I mentioned causes in sexuality change, Vlad started crying spontaneously for some reason.” … Maybe they should get Vlad a present, just in case they make another stripper.

“Our next point, however, is trying to explain your ‘voting’ actions. We know it can’t be THAT spread out without preparation in advance,” The R-rated hero explained.

C’mon, Drug-runner, just come up with another ass-pull… Got it!

“We just wanted everybody to have a bit of limelight. We already knew that Kingpin was going to win anyways, why not give the other spots to the rest of the villains?”

Please be believable, please be believable, *please be believable.*

“And what about the fact that all of you are hiding the true extent of the Civil War?”

“Wait, you saw the video?” The pink-skinned girl asked with a tinge of worry.

“I got curious as to how Larceny became my apprentice,” Midnight said, looking simultaneously impressed and horrified at the memory. She then shook her head and asked: “Well? Why are you hiding it?”

“We’re not hiding it. They just never asked,” says Drug-runner with her best poker face.

There’s a moment of silence, where Midnight stares at Drug-runner with suspicion. Drug-runner’s starting to want to *move* and she knows that if she starts fidgeting she’ll look suspicious, so she doesn’t.

Then Midnight sighs, and says: “I know all of that were just excuses. But… I can’t technically stop you, since none of those things were against the rules. Dammit, I owe Kan a bottle of sake now.”

Drug-runner laughed nervously, rubbing the back of her head.

“Listen. We’ll … try not to cause too much collateral this time,” Drug-runner said. Midnight sent her a look that could be basically described as ‘are you serious?’

“The Mechapocalypse, right! Ha ha, bit too late for that promise,” Drug-runner said nervously, causing them both to shiver at the memory.

“Damn it all. This is coming out of my salary.” Midnight sighs and moves the papers back to the center of the desk. “I won’t keep you anymore. Go enjoy your lunch, you troublesome brat,” she finished.

Drug-runner hastily bowed and walked out of the room, exhaling a huge sigh of relief when she was far away enough. She jumped up, determined to not let the close brush dampen her spirits. Instead, she had news to bring to Kingpin.

...Drug-runner hoped Kayama-sensei wouldn’t hate them too much for the other things they had planned.

Parasite didn’t like eating outside.

It wasn’t that she didn’t like the outdoors. In fact, she loved them! She just… didn’t like the sun much. It was the reason she had let her hair grow out so much, even though it was kind of difficult to see through it at times; it blocked the suns rays pretty well!

“What are you thinking of?” asked Stampede below her, cranking her

head to look up at the perch Parasite had chosen. Parasite panicked for a second at being addressed so suddenly, which let spores fly everywhere and almost made her fall out of the tree she was on.

“Uhm, no-nothing!” she stammered and took a bite out of her food, shrinking in on herself. Parasite liked Stampede, she truly did! It’s just that she’s… a bit too much at times. *People* were too much at times. It was the reason she had climbed up the tree, after all. That, and to have some shade from the sun.

Parasite saw Uraraka coming to the table Dead Drop and Stampede were at, which both intrigued and made her try to hide herself as much as she could. “Hey Dead Drop, can I talk to you for a second? If that’s ok with you guys.”

“Sure!” “ *No problem!* ” said both girls. Uraraka nodded gratefully, and she seated herself on the table.

“So, wanna talk?” asks Dead Drop with a smile.

“Yeah… ” Uraraka said with a nervous look, she looked sideways at Stampede, who smiled, so Uraraka looked back at her double and began: “Yesterday I was teamed with Forgery, and she started to to talk about Kingpin and …” Dead Drop’s expression changed to that of understanding.

“So you found out she’s dating Kingpin, right?” the villain asked. Uraraka glanced down.

“Aren’t you … jealous? I mean, if you’re me …” Dead Drop glanced over to where Forgery was and stopped to stare for a second. Parasite got curious and leaned out to see Forgery in another table … was she flirting with Singularity? ‘Oh my god, Singularity’s head froze from blushing! I should go help….nah, watching’s more fun’ Parasite thought, and couldn’t hide a snicker.

Dead Drop just waved her hand at Forgery, and smiled wide when she waved back. “Why would I be jealous of my girlfriend?” said Dead Drop. Ochako and Parasite stared, both with confusion. Until Parasite thought back and remembered seeing crossed fingers in each of their waves before. That was really sneaky!

“... Hu?” Yeah, Gravity Girl kinda put her thoughts into words.

“I just haven’t asked out Kingpin yet,” continued Dead Drop. Her poker-face had improved *leagues* since that introduction group poker

night with Pirate Radio.

(Parasite knew Pirate Radio was cheating, she just needed PROOF!)

Then Stampede, taps Dead Drop's shoulder with crossed fingers. Dead Drop puts a hand to her cheek cutely, which incidentally also has crossed fingers. Show time!

Stampede hugs Dead Drop, putting her head on Dead Drop's shoulder. "Ah, you should have told me so I could cheer you on! I'm your friend with benefits after all."

At that point Dead Drop was blushing and Ochako looked like she was going to pass out. Parasite had to hide her face in her hands to muffle her laughter.

"STAMPEDE! Who taught you to say that!?" Dead Drop nearly screamed.

" *Larceny* !" she said cheerfully … Looks like Sleight was gonna have some punching to do latter.

"A–are you really going to confess to Deku?" Uraraka asked with a stutter, trying to get her thoughts together.

"Yeah, I'm just … waiting for the right time is all." Dead Drop said nervously. Why was she– 'Oh right! She still thinks no one knows about her crush,' Parasite muses.

Stampede unexpectedly get's still as she slams her hands on the ground. "Then I'm gonna help!" … 'Oh this was gonna be *fun*!' thought Parasite.

"What?!?" say both Urarakas, looking like at Stampede as if she had spontaneously grown another head.

" *Both* of you ask your Izukus out tonight! I'll even get *Pony* to help!" says Stampede, looking excited at the prospect of working together with her counterpart.

The two lovestruck girls began to mumble out excuses and stutter out reasons. Time to throw in her own hat, it seems.. "I … think I can help."

All of the people below startled, too focused on their drama to remember Parasite was there. However, as soon as she began to speak,

she started to get nervous again. “I, um, I thought maybe…” Parasite took a deep breath and let the words out in a rush. Otherwise she would never finished her sentence. “I overheard the girls talking about a party last night and if the party happened we could help both of you get your Midoriyas alone and confess to both of them since it wouldn’t be as weird as just confessing out of nowhere and–”

Parasite cut herself off, aware that she was rambling, and shut her mouth. By the look on Stampede’s face, Parasite’s job was already done.

Stampede started to say something really fast in English, and then ran away towards the table where Sleight and Drug-runner sat.

Both Urarakas were left speechless in her wake, like statues dedicated to lovestruck idiots.

“... We’re fucked.” Huh, guess she did pick up something from with Powerhouse.

The training ground was full of chatter and movement, class 1-A on one side, 1-B on the other. ‘Just like it should be,’ thought Monoma, idly chatting with his counterpart.

“–and the quiet, giant one just made a rat– a rat!– climb the tree to steal my apple!” Larceny finishes saying. Monoma wrinkles his nose and says: “How underhanded of 1-A to do such a thing! Did he get his just desserts?”

“I threw the other apple at him. My aim is fantastical, so it nailed him right in the forehead!” They both had a chuckle at that.

Monoma saw him putting an arm around Sleight’s shoulders and leaning into her. They looked … close. Did he finally *confess*!?! Oh, it made him nervous just thinking about it. Still, it was … nice to see he had the potential.

All Might walked in with his counterpart, looking like they thought today was going be a good day. “All right students! You’ve had lots of opportunities to get to know you other selves, and what is different

between both of you–" "–So today we'll work with helping your counterparts with Quirks!" continues Toshinori-sensei. "It's likely that the different experiences caused different developments in Quirks, so good luck!"

… Damn it! There wasn't anything to DISCOVER about his Quirk. It was just one at a time copying, that was it.

Larceny seemed to think otherwise, as he started dragging Monoma to a corner a bit separated from the rest of the class.

"There is something I want to teach you!" says Larceny as soon as they get into the isolated part of the field. He takes out a few rings from the pockets of his costume, and all of the rings have names engraved on them. Larceny drops one into Monoma's palm, and he inspects it, finding strands of hair on the inside of it. He reads the engravings aloud:

"Hardening, Acid, Electrification, Super Power… is all of this hair from *1-A!?!* How did you get these!?!"

"I have my ways," says Larceny with a smug smile, before taking the ones with the engravings of Acid, Creation and Electrification and putting them on his left hand.

"Watch this," Larceny says, and activates the Acid Quirk. He produces a thin stream that sprays all over one of the targets set out randomly along the field. He then switches to Creation, forming a long metal rod out of his forearm with ease born out of practice. Then he switches again to Electrification, producing a low current all over him. He gestures Monoma to stand back, while reaching out to the corner of the puddle of acid with the rod from a safe distance.

The current travels through the metal rod and to the acid. With a flash of heat, the acid ignites, enveloping the target in flames in the blink of an eye.

Monoma stands, gaping at the slowly-carbonizing target. From the corner of his eye he sees more people staring at the destruction.

"The strength in our Quirk doesn't lie in learning each individual Quirk as deeply as we can, or even training to switch between them rapidly. It's knowing how to use the Quirks we have in useful combinations," Larceny says, putting another ring on and producing ice to put out the fire.

“Wait, so you didn’t work on rapid switching? How did you even do that, weren’t you trying to train the time limit?” Monoma asked, furrowing his brows in confusion.

Larceny laughs, and says: “You really didn’t notice that things changed?” He reaches again to his pockets, to take out a cord full of different rings. “In the Civil War, I realized just how much potential my Quirk has, and stopped trying to push the time limit to work on this… and other things of course,” he says, taking the cord and returning the rings to their place.

Monoma blinks out of his stupor. “Really? The fight under *1-A* leadership did this?” he says, gesturing at the still-smoking mess of wreckage and ice.

Larceny doesn’t answer, and instead smiles secretively. He spins the cord of rings around his finger and throws it in the air. While the cord is rising and falling, he takes off the suit jacket and throws it aside, revealing that the shirt underneath was a lot more… *revealing* than first assumed. He catches the string flawlessly and puts it around his neck.

“Life is full of surprises. Shall we begin?” he asks, offering his hand as if they were both in a ballroom.

Monoma takes it, something nagging him in the back of his mind. He forgets he ever thought that in the midst of planning, Quirks and testing.

Deku kicked a rock around nervously, waiting for his counterpart to arrive.

He had considered avoiding his counterpart for about twenty seconds, before he realized he wouldn’t be able to solve this if he kept running away from the problem. So, he resolved to stand his ground.

“Sorry I’m late!” calls Kingpin, running towards him with a sheepish smile on his face. Deku knows the smile is genuine, the excitement is genuine, the slight guilt is genuine, even. But somehow he’s still a liar.

“Could I talk to you for a second?” he says, gesturing towards a bunch of rocks that could be used as a seat. Deku reluctantly follows and watches with apprehension as Kingpin takes out his notebook and places it on his lap.

“What–what do you want?” says Deku, facing Kingpin with his head held high.

Kingpin looks over at him and sighs. “I wanted to apologize.”

“What?!?”

“I’m not apologizing for the lying, or the plans or anything of that. I’m apologizing for the way I talked to you after you saw what was happening. I was kind of… freaking out and didn’t want to let anyone down, so I panicked and said the first thing I thought would make you not tell anyone,” he looks down and sideways, gripping the spine of his notebook tightly. “I’m sorry for that.”

Deku is silent, thinking over and trying to see if there’s any lie or omission in his words, and he can’t find any.

“…Why would you apologize?” Deku says, staring uncomprehendingly at him.

“We’re here to become the best heroes we can be, aren’t we? I only played the role of a villain so I could challenge everyone and help prepare us for life as Pros. I don’t want to make enemies out of friends. I had forgotten that for a moment,” he said, turning to face him fully.
Deku realized he had also forgotten something. He’d completely ignored they were the same person, too blinded by the differences he had found. But that also begged the question as to…

“How did you get like this?” asked Deku, finally seating himself beside Kingpin. “Did the Civil War really change things that much?”

“It changed me. And we were always in the middle of important things, so it changed those as well. And all our friends… they changed too,” Kingpin says, looking at the pairs of of people, Quirks active, improving themselves as much as they could.

“So all of them are more villainous too?” asks Deku, finding the concept hard to swallow.

Kingpin laughs and says: “I’d forgotten I was this black-and-white

once. They're not more villainous, they're just as focused in becoming heroes as the people from your timeline. No, if anything, they're more aware of what they can *do* ." Kingpin smiles to both to their friends and to himself, looking like he had accepted the concept fully.

"I–I don't think I can understand," says Deku, his voice growing more confident with every word. "I don't think being more ruthless or knowing how much destruction they can cause will make them better heroes. It goes against everything we've ever believed! And… I don't think I can accept that," he finishes, jaw grit in determination.

"So this is not a battle of people," begins Kingpin, setting the notebook aside. "This is a battle of ideals. The only way to prove an ideal is better than another is by putting them into practice."

Deku realized where this was going, "This is a declaration of war, isn't it?"

Kingpin nods seriously, his eyes speaking of determination and challenge.

Deku stands up and turns to face Kingpin, extending his gloved hand towards him. "Then I accept your challenge! I'll be the best hero I can be!"

He stands up to, holding out his own hand, saying: "And I'll be the best villain I can be."

"Let's do our best!" both of them say at the same time, by complete accident.

Kingpin seems to blink and laughs, saying: "I came here to offer you a truce, and here I am, declaring war."

Izuku cocks his head to the side, confused as to what he's talking about.

"The villains decided as a group that we would give our all teaching what we know about our Quirks and fighting to all of you, because the heroes were going to do that anyways. Think of it as an exchange of knowledge in preparation for the Civil War," explains Kingpin, going back to take his notebook and opening it to a page detailing how he managed to get enough control of One for All to be able to use acrobatic moves effectively.

This time Deku catches the omission. "You won't be teaching any of us

things that have to do with gear, will you?”

Kingpin smiles without a hint of regret, and says: “So?”

Izuku needs every advantage he can get.

“I’m in.”

Rin’s completely covered from head to toe in dirt, tired until the point of exhaustion and with a light headache from trying to concentrate for the past two hours. Both Shiozakis have little scratches everywhere from trying to control the amount and length of thorns they have. The Nirengekis have bruises here and there from trying to use their Quirk for increased mobility. Yet, all of them can't stop smiling from ear to ear. It’s the most fun they’ve had together in ages, and all of them got at least one new trick from their counterpart, so the festive mood is pretty welcome.

Rin’s own double, Basilisk, is talking to Kodai and her double, Fractal, showing them how sharp his claws have become by scratching deep gauges on the nearby wall. Rin hopes he doesn’t overdo it. Basilisk already knows that his claws may be a lot sharper than normal, but also more brittle, and he really doesn’t want to explain to the teachers why there are chunks of nails stuck on the walls.

As all of them are trying to exit the training ground, the pink girl from 1-A sets herself right in the middle of the entrance and shouts:

“FIRST YEARS! I HAVE NEWS!”

The chatter and complaints die down, all eyes fixed on her. Her counterpart shouts: “C’mon tell it already!”

“As some of you may know,” says pink-girl in a mock-theatrical tone. “Some of us wanted to throw a party at the dorms, and we just got the ok to do it!!!”

Cheers rise from the students. The redhead with the Hardening Quirk grabs a flag from … somewhere and the girls with earphone jacks dangling from her ears plays a fanfare for her phone. Aoyama starts

sparkling far too close to Rin for comfort.

“Way to go, Ashido!” screams the invisible girl, jumping up and down.

Ashido grins, strikes a pose and says: “4 classes, 82 students, all together in one huge event! Let us make it the best goddamn–” the Shiozakis gasp “–gosh darn party thrown in human history. Who’s with me!”

The screams of excitement (and of anger from the two explodey guys) reach a volume Rin’s only ever heard coming from the mouth of Present Mic. Eraserhead looks like he’s regretting becoming a teacher. There are shouts of organization and diving tasks, and Rin immediately knows this party is going to get out of hand.

Rin’s looking forward to it.

“Kodai, pass the scissors!” screams Shibari, hanging from the top part of the dorms from a harness made out of his own tape. Kodai uses her Quirk to shrink herself enough to get the scissors from the table they were left in, and enlarges herself again to give them to Shibari. Both of them return to their tasks; Shibari hanging streamers and Kodai sticking posts for tents in the yard behind the first year dorms.

Shoto was snapped out of his momentary distraction by a tap on his shoulder. Singularity, his counterpart, gestures with his right hand towards the chunk of ice they’re trying to carve, a flame steadily burning in his left.

It’s a slow job, one both of them are determined to do right. Shoto has been thinking of it as just another training exercise they have to do; keeping a small, high-temperature flame going in their hands, allowing them to melt the ice enough to get the details on the ice statue they’re making.

Yet, Shoto has already made a few mistakes, ones he iced over of course, all because he can’t concentrate. He’s been trying to think of anything to say to begin a conversation with his counterpart for almost ten minutes now, and he has had absolutely no luck.

He can see both Tsuburabas taking over Shibari's job, using their Quirks simultaneously to create air-platforms strong enough to hold both of them as they hang streamers. Shibari descends to join his counterpart in being used as a tape dispenser.

...Shoto realizes he got distracted again, and admits to himself that he's really getting nowhere with this. He should just say *anything* before the moment passes and he's left looking for yet another opportunity that might not come.

"Why did you chose Singularity as your villain alias?" asks Shoto, internally disappointed at himself for having chosen such a random question.

Singularity glances over at him briefly, before turning back to his work. Shoto knows he's hard to read, but he'd never would have thought he was *this* hard to read. Shoto knows that his double is thoughtful and slightly hesitant, but beyond that he has no idea as to what he could be thinking.

"It was a reminder," he says, carefully melting the ice to form the beak of a swan. "A way of reminding myself that I am not two halves stuck together, but one whole."

"Does father…?" says Shoto, leaving half the question unsaid. He doesn't need to complete it, after all.

Singularity freezes, and then hastily pulls back his hand to keep himself from messing up the statue. He looks for a second at the flames crackling in his palm, and then sighs.

"He does have something to do with it," Singularity admits, and looks towards Shoto."How does father… treat you?" he finishes hesitantly.

"After I interned with him, he left us alone for a while, so we fended for ourselves. It was … nice. Him being away," Shoto says. It's difficult to talk about this, and Shoto finds he can't do it while looking directly at Singularity. So he turns back to working on the statue, and Singularity does the same.

"Did you know that Endeavor had the record for best Kingpin in UA?" begins Singularity with a non-sequitur. "He was proud of being able to win the Civil War in a position of severe disadvantage. He wanted me to win like that as well, so he ordered me to enter the villain team."

Shoto wondered if it was alright to snort at the irony. The man who

wanted him to be the Number One hero *also* wanted him on the villain team. Given the personal situation … he decided not to.

“And you refused?” Shoto asked with trepidation.

“I did. I'm still not not sure if that was the right idea but one thing is for sure, it undid everything I had done by accepting my father's offer to intern with him,” Singularity finished with a sigh.

“So … he was harder on you?” Shoto asked with concern. If the way Singularity had gone against his father’s command was bad enough, he could go back to the way he treated Shoto when he was refusing to use his fire.

“Not just that. The experience I gained in the Civil War … it contradicted what he taught me. So I was even more confused about how to … be a hero than before.” There was an awkward silence for a few moments. He wasn’t sure how to go along or talk about something like this. No one except Midoriya, but he didn’t have the same issues he did.

Heck, Midoriya probably didn’t have many home issues, other than his dad never being there when he was young. Although his dad was here now, he knew for certain it was All Might, but had no evidence to back it up, so that kinda muted the issue.

But here was Singularity, someone who *went through* the same thing! He had to somehow help. Wait … Shoto grabbed a chipped piece of ice. If something like this made Iida and Midoriya laugh after they were depressed about Iida’s messed up arm, then maybe something like it would lighten the mood. Even if he still didn’t understand why the Hand Crusher Curse was a joke to those two.

“So should we … break the ice?” said Shoto … The silence was even more awkward. Why wasn’t this working!?

A small smile tugged at his counterpart’s mouth, and Shoto finally relaxed and let the piece of ice melt completely.

“The effort’s appreciated, but I don’t think it’ll get better from a joke.” Shoto nodded in understanding.

“So … how are you and Momo?” says Shoto after a second. Singularity's head starts to freeze from blushing. It was his body’s way of balancing the heat, so he couldn’t help it at all. Shoto, placed a hand on his face to thaw it back out.

Singularity nods gratefully, and creates a block of ice to carve out another statue from. Apparently someone wanted a giant ice statue of All Might. Three guesses as to who.

Both of them continue to talk softly in between working for the rest of the day.

Katsuki stomped through the dorm's entrance, growling at anyone who got in his way. Iida tries to rope him into helping with the preparations, and Katsuki considers not blowing him up as his kind act of the day.

Katsuki tears through the living room towards the elevator with a scowl. He can't believe he has to deal with this fucking noise for the rest of the night. If he's not able to fall asleep by 8:30, he's blasting every noise maker until they shut up and let him sleep.

He presses the button and taps his foot impatiently as he waits for the goddamn door to open. As he gets in he presses the fourth floor and glares as the door closes. Unexpectedly, a hand stops it from closing. Whoever was delaying him was gonna– DEKU!?

As the nerd waits for the door to close, Uraraka tries to run to the door, sensing the chaos that would unfold. Unfortunately, it was too late. The doors shut, sealing his fate. It was then when a thought occurred to Katsuki.

"What the fuck, isn't your room on the second floor? Why the hell do you need an elevator for that?"

"I don't need the elevator, Kacchan," says Deku hurriedly. "I just needed to talk to you where nobody could hear us."

"Then fucking talk," growls out Katsuki, tiny explosions beginning to crackle on his palms.

Deku stammers and stutters a few times, just like when he's forced to completely improvise something. Did he really try this stupid idea on a whim?

“Kingpin’s lying,” states Deku, and Katsuki freezes. “I know it because of something to do with my Quirk, I can’t tell you anymore about that. But Kingpin’s been manipulating things from the start, just so he can win the UA War. Don’t tell anybody outright unless you have an excuse for it,” finishes Deku, taking a huge gulp of air after that whole speech.

“The fuck?!?” responds Katsuki. “What the shit– you fuck, you can’t just drop that and then not say shit about your Qu–”

The elevator pings, and the door opens.”Sorry, gotta prep!” Deku then runs off. Katsuki manages to catch Deku’s wrist and says: “Fight me, you nerd! I want answers!”

Deku seems to think for a second, looking straight into Katsuki’s eyes. He then smiles and says: “I promise I’ll do that after the UA War!” and he frees himself from Katsuki’s grip.

Katsuki remains frozen as the doors of the elevator close, leaving him all alone.

“... FUCK!”

What the hell was he supposed to do with something like that? It’s not like he had anything to go off of. The door opens on the third floor as a blushing Shitty Hair, Pinky, Villain Pinky and Villain Knock off Pikachu– that nickname was way too long– Villain Sparky get on.

The villain versions of Sparky and Shitty Hair are flirting outrageously with villain Pinky. Katsuki looks a bit closely and notices something else: ‘... Weren’t Villain Hair and Villain Sparky crossing fingers when the kissed after the watermelon fight? … Lying… Deku said the knock-off Deku was lying. Who said the other villains aren’t? Of fucking course.’

It made a bit too much fucking sense. Misdirection. Confuse the enemy by diverting their attention elsewhere. The clever bastards thought they could fool him, HA!

As the door opens on the fourth floor, he grabs Shitty Hair and Pinky dragging them by the collar, ignoring their protests.

“Listen up you fuckers!” Katsuki says, throwing those two into his room and shutting the door with a bang.

“Next time, be more gentle,” Pink says, rubbing her ass and slowly

standing up.

“Why does you needing to tell us something involve so much roughhousing?” asks Shitty Hair with his head half-cocked to the side.

Katsuki thinks for a split-second and then says: “We got pranked. Those other-us fuckers have been messing with us since the fucking start.”

“Huh!?!” exclaim both idiots. Pinky seats herself on Katsuki’s desk as if she owned the place. Better teach her manners at some point, unless she somehow earns the seat. Shitty Hair seats himself cross legged on the floor.

“Every single fucking time those villain shits have flirted with each other, they’ve had crossed fingers. Like they’re fucking *lying* ,” he spit the last word with venom.

Shitty Hair gapes at Katsuki with eyes the size of baseballs, while Pinky only looked surprised for a second. She got a look of understanding, which then dissolved into… why the fuck did she look *calm*?!?

“I can’t believe it. I went through HOURS of questioning … because of a prank!?” screams Shitty Hair, jumping up from where he’s sitting and throwing his hands up in the air.

“Yeah, it fucking sucks. However, now we know if the shit have their fingers crossed, ignore the hell out them.” Shitty Hair looked at him blankly for second, sweating, but nodded. They both turned to Pink, who’d been … was she putting on MAKEUP!?!

“Um, Mina, are you ok?” asked Shitty Hair, at the same time Katsuki asked: “Are you fucking serious?!?”

“Baku-boy, chill. I have a plan that will solve *everything* ,” she says confidently, applying eyeliner sharp enough to kill a man without a hitch.

“... A plan?” They ask at the same time, Shitty Hair with curiosity, Katsuki with suspicion.

“Well, they trick us, confuse us, and make us question our sexuality ... " she then puts on a very *him* grin. "I think we should repay the favor, with interest."

… Ashido just earned a name worth remembering.

Clothes, make up kits, and random beauty products were strewn about the room the girls had commandeered for themselves. The boys were using the dorms for dressing up, while the girls had decided to get ready in the building the villains were staying at so they could have more space. Compared to the dorms, the place was pretty barren, but hey, for a building constructed in a day and a half it pretty darn good.

Pirate Radio was doing her hair, careful to avoid her ears, while half-listening to the voices around her. Mostly gossip, nothing really important.

“Anyways, I definitely know that Nightmare and Blackout are a thing! I saw them flirting the other day. Don’t you think it’s kind of romantic? Two people from enemy classes, falling for each other?”

“No way! I saw Nightmare kissing Assault the other day… do you think he’s cheating?

“That’s impossible, Nightmare would never do that!”

“Then how do you explain what I saw!”

“Well I saw Blackout kissing Magdalene on Tuesday.”

“Maybe they’re in an open relationship? Or are friends with benefits?”

“Do you know anything about this, Pirate Radio?”

Forty different people are suddenly staring at PR, who freezes, blinks and sets the hairbrush on the table. “I really don’t know what the deal is,” she lies, grabbing her phone and inserting one of her earjacks into the earphone port and tapping shuffle on the first playlist she was going to play tonight.

She can’t believe she tricked them into paying her for being the DJ. She would have done it for free if they said so, just like Present Mic had been roped into doing.

“It’s impossible for you to have missed everything with the Quirk you

have!” shouts Extortion.

Pirate Radio just uses her free earphone jack to write ‘fuck off’ on the steam of the mirror.

Both of the Shizokai gasp, then they start to pray.

“You may win this round, mirror, but we will have vengeance!” shouts Hakagure, dramatically turning and pointing accusatorily at the mirror. Giggles and laughs bloom around the room.

“Has anybody seen my dress?” shouts Tsuyu, peeking out while wrapped in a towel.

“You left it beside mine on the couch of the living room!” answers Uraraka cheerfully. Tsuyu keros as thanks and ducks back out.

Pirate Radio continues to do her hair, before noticing a figure from the mirror. She turned to see Jirou coming to sit beside her, who starts to talk in morse code by tapping her earjacks on the wood of the table.

“So, you’re the gossip channel as well,” her tapping says.

“Yeah. Guess some things just don’t change,” she taps back before her phone buzzes in her pocket. She takes it out, looking at the messages from the hero class villains group chat, which is now being used as a meme ground by four fifths of the Bakusquad.

“But you– or we– learned ways to stop them most of the time,” she tapped back.

“True. I once stopped them with playing their mp30 in class.” They both shared a chuckle.

“It’s nice to talk to a girl with common sense,” Pirate Radio tapped.

“Yeah … hey, I saw Feedback earlier today, and he seemed really close to Drug-runner.” Pirate Radio frowned. “I was wondering … have you–"

Pirate Radio sighed and answered her question with a couple taps. “No, I haven’t asked him out yet.” There was an awkward silence as they prepared.

A knock comes from the door, and all of the girls chorus “Come in!”

“Sorry for barging in girls,” says Midnight-sensei, stepping into the room while swinging her hips sensually. “I come bearing a few gifts!” she says, effortlessly raising what looks to be a makeup kit the size of a speaker. She sets it down with a dull thud and announces: “Extortion, darling, you have homework to do!” and slips back out the door.

“What’s that about?” says the calm voice of Kodai, looking up from putting on heels.

“The thing is, I’m being trained by Midnight-sensei in the art of disguise–” Setsuna explains, opening the kit to reveal that it has more than just make up. There are at least five different wigs, a box full of extensions, even a few very realistic fake wounds. “–And she wants me to use what I’ve learned until now. I bet Larceny’s in the same situation right now with the boys.”

“Oooh, can you change eye color using just eyeshade?” asks Drug-runner, jumping up and down to get a better view from behind the small crowd that formed around the kit.

Setsuna nods and cheers rise from the girls.

Kendo doesn’t look too happy though: “Are you sure leaving Larceny alone in charge of 1-A’s makeup is a good idea?”

“Don’t worry about it,” interjects Sleight, putting an arm around her counterpart. “If it’s an order from Midnight, he won’t even try to go against it."

Kendo doesn’t look very convinced, but lets it go anyways.

PR doesn’t focus on that situation much longer. Turns out Setsuna can draw fake tattoos, and she has *so many ideas* .

This party is going to be *wild.*

The place is packed with kids practically vibrating in excitement. Pristine decorations hang from every corner. White smoke slithers around on the floor, coming from a sophisticated set of lights,

speakers and other assorted machines framing the DJ booth, already blasting music at full volume. A long table full of food sits on the right of the room, showcasing everything from doritos to a sushi bar.

From the tent it's possible to see the gigantic sign proclaiming "First Year Hero Course Party" in stylized kanji, a collaboration of the two Mangas, and both Kirishimas and Kamakiris acting as scalpels. Someone had scribbled "and Shinsou" on a corner of it after someone had pointed out he was being invited too. And someone else tried to write "and the Hatsumes" on the sign after they bribed their way into the party with their party machines.

Ashido and Drug-runner, as the main sponsors of this party, walk onstage, microphones in hand, looking radiant in their dresses.

"Okay, everybody, are you ready?!?" screams Drug-runner. The dress she's wearing, a long blue and green ensemble with a fluffy feathered collar, gives her an air of eccentric royalty.

She's met with eighty cheers, whoops and screams from the stylishly-dressed crowd.

Ashido, on the other hand, chose a black shirt with criss-crossing straps, a black choker and a long flowing skirt, which all seem to scream "dance with me".

She does a twirl and a jump, her skirt flaring out with her. She strikes a pose, fist raised in the air, and screams:

"LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED!"

The Party (can't go on)

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lights flashed through the room and over the people jumping up and down in tune with the music. Huge speakers blasted the crowd with beats of new, catchy songs, or obscure titles they'd never heard of.

Hanta whooped and pumped up his fist as Tank and Kirishima decided to go crowdsurfing, which normally wouldn't be possible with the amount of people in the room, but all of them were heroes-in-training with strength surpassing the average, so the two redheads got to have the time of their lives.

Hanta heard a shout of "behind you!" and he turned around to watch Dead Drop dive to hit a colorful blur. Somebody had brought beach balls and people had made a game of never letting those touch the floor no matter the circumstances, even if it took a risk of injury and made them run all around the dorms. It was insane to see Asui and Dart stick to the ceiling and floor to make a makeshift slingshots out of their tongues.

Something explodes in the kitchen, and people do nothing more than cheer at the destruction after Sato and his counterpart Overdose emerge from the destruction covered in soot but telling everybody it was fine.

Hanta does nothing but laugh, and raise his glass of punch in a makeshift toast with a bug-looking guy from 1-B he doesn't even know the name of. The other guy raises his glass to and smirks in response, so Hanta marks him up as a cool guy in his book, and stumbles over to the kitchen to see just what the hell happened.

He ducks under the arm of a dramatically-posing Aoyama (he doesn't even know which one it is and frankly right now doesn't care) to push open the door. He almost turns back right then and there when he sees the two pink demons, one of them wearing something straight out

of a steampunk, complete with actual gadgets that spew smoke, and the other with a snake-scale patterned dress that somehow shifts in tone and color like an oil-spill on water any time she moves.

His escape is thwarted by Sato (the traitor!) grabbing him from his collar and dragging him deeper into the kitchen, all the while saying: “Sero! Whew, that was lucky. I need someone to taste-test some stuff for me and these keep these two away. They keep trying to improve recipes, and neither of them have baked. Ever! In their lives!”

Sato sends a glare that on a scale from Koda to Bakugou, rates between a Midoriya and a Todoroki.

“But we have done plenty of chemistry experiments before! Baking is simply just applied chemistry, and if you just add a drop of–” says Hatsume excitedly, three different places in her dress suddenly spewing blue smoke that smells of pineapples.

“For the last time, you don’t add ignitables to cake batter!” screams an enraged Overdose, picking up a collection of empty bottles from the table.

Hacker seems to freeze at the sight of the bottles, eyes widening comically as she starts to frantically pat the pockets of her dress. The crosses she has in her eyes suddenly begin to spin, scanning each bottle before leaping forward to snatch one in specific. She tips it over the sink, first slightly, then all at once. Nothing drips out, it’s pretty much empty.

“You know, you’re right! We best be on our way.” She grabs her counterpart as they dash out of the door.

“Hey, where are you guys going?” says Sero, and the Hatsumes pretend not to hear him as they leave the room in a hurry, but unfortunately forget that his elbows are a bit bigger than normal. Hanta ends up accidentally knocking the bottle out of Hacker’s hands, and she doesn’t even pause to get it back.

“What, are we suddenly in a Cinderella remake?” jokes Prism as she enters the kitchen and the duo runs past her.

Hanta attempts to read the label, but it’s too smudged to make out, other than two small portions: ‘Hatsume Industries Invention Number 45–, side effects include: mild euphoria, decreased inhibitions, increased pain tolerance and energy boost. Cleared for testing–’

Hanta feels a cold shiver run down his spine.

“Oh, I came by to tell you guys that Sleight has an announcement,” said Prism as she embraced Overdose, standing on her tiptoes to deposit a kiss on his nose. His mind was forced away from the bottle by the intimacy of them, making him blush. Plus, he had to admit he was kind of curious about the announcement.

“That’s all, see you later guys!” she says as she spins so that all the chains and jewelry she’s wearing moves with her, defining exactly where she is in a way that leaves Hanta with his heart racing.

He blinks a few times and clears his throat to focus back on the matter at hand.

“Uuh, Sato, Overdose, what did you guys use this for?” says Sero, holding up the bottle for both of them to see. Sato point towards the punch that the welding guy was carrying to the main room.

Hanta isn’t paying attention anymore. His eyes widen as he realises what's going to happen. He turns, sprinting out of the kitchen and into the party, trying to get to the bowl of punch before it disappeared. He was going to say something until–

“Attention please!” said Sleight with a mic, smiling from the stage. “Ladies and gentlemen, perverts and Bakugous. Tonight we got us a pole dancer!” There was an uproar at Sleights statement, the more shameless people getting wild, while the ‘classy’ students were not approving of a show of skin. A lone figure covered in a cape came in with smoke, courtesy of the inventors that made this mess. Excitement and confusion was welling up in all the students.

“Put your hands together for the one, the only …” The cape was pulled back, to reveal … “LARCENY!”

Hanta could almost hear an audible crack in the minds of everyone in the room. Mineta and Kaminari in particular looked like they were frozen into statues titled “disappointment of the fools”. The ‘classy’ students also gained a ‘wtf’ look on them. Monoma … he looked like he needed to lie down.

Sleight, however, went on like it was no big deal. “Larceny, would you like any song in particular?”

“SoMo Ride, if you would, Sleight-chan,” Larceny said with a wink, then turned back and walked to the pole like he owned it. Mineta

started mumbling something about ‘over 100’ vintage.

Pirate Radio shuffled some of her records, before pulling out one and blowing off A LOT of dust off of it. She placed it on the player as she put a needle on it. Larceny closed his eyes as he moved, looking like he was slowly got into the groove.

He was wearing a white dress shirt and pants with a black tie on it, with a light dusting of makeup on his face, tailored to make him look more masculine. He put a hand on the pole, leaning on it, one foot slightly raised over the floor, face turned away from the crowd.

Hanta had to admit he didn’t look half-bad. Scratch that, he looked like a model. Still, he just couldn’t picture how Larceny, the batshit crazy 1-A hating kid, would do something like this.

The music starts, and it’s … explicit. VERY explicit. But somehow sweet at the same time, slow and sensual, yet melodic.

Larceny slowly looks back to the crowd, his eyes opening lazily, a smirk dancing on his face. He moves his head, batting his long eyelashes, letting them rest for a second on his cheeks, lightly running a hand through his hair. With a roll of his hips, he steps forward and hooks a leg on the pole, twirling once around it with dexterity, all the while smoothly untying the tie he’s wearing, letting it flutter to the ground, awarding the watchers with a hint of well-defined pecs.

A few people cheer in the crowd, and there’s even a few wolf-whistles in it. Kendo is doing her best not to blush (failing badly) while Sleight simply looks like she’s enjoying the show. Pony’s eyes are wide, but there’s a hint of a grin on her face, and soon gets sucked in by Stampede’s cheering.

Larceny responds with a blown kiss and curling himself around the pole, flipping himself over in a way that gets him arching away from the metal, facing the crowd and slowly licking his lips. The smirk returns to his face, that same smirk of superiority he’s worn over and over again when taunting 1-A, but with the half-lidded look to his eyes and the slow way he’s popping open his shirt, button by button, gives it a whole new meaning. “Give in to me, and I’ll make losing feel good to you.”

Larceny’s shirt falls to the ground, revealing glistening skin and rows of perfectly defined abs.

Sero’s face feels like it’s going to explode from blushing so hard, so he

turns before another, more embarrassing thing, happens to him. He stumbles out of the room in a daze, passing by other blushing people, side-stepping over Monoma where's he's stuck gaping at his counterpart, and finally (finally!) getting out of the dorms and into the back yard.

The cold wind snaps at his face, and he welcomes the needed cool-down.

"Oooh, one for you!" screams Ashido right beside him, and Hanta jumps three feet in the air, whirling around while screeching.

Ashido just starts to laugh, doubling over and falling to the ground, reveling in Sero's misery. "Oh my god, you just screamed like a pterodactyl, holy fuck," she says, and then dissolves into more laughter.

Hanta gets enough of that and tapes her mouth shut. She still *doesn't stop laughing* , she just stands up and slowly peels of the tape without even flinching once.

Somebody giggles to his right, and Hanta finally notices that Forgery has been standing beside them the whole time.

"Sorry, Sero. We made a bet as to how many people would get out of the room because they were seduced by Larceny's performance, and how many would get out because they didn't like it," Forgery says, completely unashamed, as she makes a tally mark in a little notebook she's holding. She then pockets the notebook, and takes a cup from where it was propped on a nearby table.

"Where did you get that?" asks Sero, pointing at the cup's contents.

Forgery and Ashido giggle again, and the former points to a pitcher of punch in one of the tables nearby. "They just put fresh punch on the table, if you would like some."

That is when Hanta notices how both of them have a hint of manic glee in their laughs and smiles, how Forgery, normally calm, can't seem to sit still, and how there are already three empty glasses of punch on the table nearby.

Oh, fuck.

"Seroooooooo!" suddenly screams Ashido right in his face, and starts to drag him away. "I have something to tell you, you won't believe what

I just found out!”

“Wait, no. Ash–”

“No time!” she screams and runs to a corner of the tent set up in the yard. Hanta pauses to recover his breath. Holy crap, he really underestimated just how fit Ashido is.

“Ok, ok, ok, look over there at ghost girl and birdhead,” Hanta looks at those two, who glance over at where Hanta and Ashido are standing, and then begin dancing a slow waltz while looking into each other’s eyes. Hanta wants to look away from the intimate scene, but Ashido insists: “Did you see that?”

She must notice his look of confusion, so she says: “The crossed fingers!”

Hanta has no idea what she’s talking about. But then the guy who is literally dark-skinned approaches the two of them with crossed fingers, and the three of them begin dancing, no less intimately than before.

“What the hell,” mutters Sero.

“They’re messing with us!” says Ashido, a bit too loud and a bit too giddy, but Hanta finds he has to agree, now that he looks back and remembers all of their counterparts being lovey-dovey when they were being watched most of the time.

“I have a plan though, if you’re interested!” she says, and giggles, taking his hand in hers. She winks and says: “Call me Mina, ok?”

Hanta thinks he might need to drink the punch himself to survive the plan, but what the hell, he’s come this far, he can’t back out now.

(Yep, that’s the *only* reason why he agrees with the plan. Completely. Absolutely.)

Feedback sparked with excitement as he watched everybody lose their shit at Larceny. He enjoyed the performance, don’t get him wrong, it was only that watching Tetsutetsu snort soda through his nose when

Larceny did full-body rolls like a professional was a *huge* bonus.

The song ended (way too soon, in Feedback's opinion) with a standing ovation, some people stealthily wiping drool off the corners of their mouths.

Mineta looked like he wanted to cry at all the attention from the girls Larceny was getting, and Feedback snickered behind his hand at him. Oh, of course Feedback was jealous too, but he'd learned that the fact that girls liked Larceny didn't mean girls didn't like him, and that made Mineta's expression more funny than relatable.

The crowd begins chanting for an encore, but Larceny refuses smoothly, saying that he's tired. It's not a complete lie, but the truth is Larceny's still an amateur at pole dancing. He'd worked his butt off yesterday to get that one song up to snuff, so he doesn't have any other dance at performance-level standards.

Now Forgery took the stage. "Well that was certainly an event. Yet, the evening isn't over. There's plenty more in store for the rest of this party!" she says, jumping up and down with excitement.

Feedback cheers along with the rest of the audience, taking a swig from his cup and going to sit beside Magdalene, 'cuz she's hot. She's talking rather animatedly with Dead Drop, which would normally be suspicious, but the villains had decided to do away with most of pretenses for the party. It would have been a lost cause to try and dissimulate anyway.

"Are you going to dance, Forgery?!?" asks Mineta, already drooling and obviously staring at her boobs through the suit she decided to wear for the party. He knocks over a collection of cups on the table that have to be his. He doesn't bother picking them up.

She shakes her head, her face tinged with discomfort at the face Mineta's making. "No, I'm not. Though I'm sure someone else might–"

"Dance! Dance! Dance!" begins chanting Mineta, jumping up and down amidst the crowd. Forgery is looking more and more tense by the word.

Feedback considers joining the chant for about half a second, until he spots Pirate Radio's earphone jacks snaking towards Mineta's neck. Going by the expression she has on her face, Feedback is worried that they'd have to leave the party with a body count.

Somebody beats her to the punch.

“Yo, she’s uncomfortable, so fuck off!” screams Hacker, planting herself with hands on her hips in front of Mineta and gritted teeth. Mineta just starts staring at *her* boobs and making grabby-hand motions.

“Knock it off Mineta,” says Con Man, towering behind Mineta with narrowed eyes.

“Nuh uh, I saw her first, so I get to–” he then turns around and realizes just who he talked back to and shuts his mouth with a click. Con Man simply walks towards Hacker, and stands beside her with a stony expression.

“Leave our girlfriend the fuck *alone* ,” glares Hacker, taking a menacing step forward.

‘Oh, damn. Shit’s getting real,’ thinks Feedback an leans forward in his chair. From the hours he has spent with Hacker, he knows she would definitely make that every single electrical appliance in UA fails for the pervert. Con Man would straight-up punch him. Feedback starts giggling, only half-aware of the little sparks coming out of him.

“What’s going on here, guys?” and lo and behold, the savior of the situation arrives. Kingpin walks towards them with a quizzical expression in his eyes.

“Just making a few things *clear* for Mineta, right?” drawls Con Man, smirking and slinging an arm around Kingpin’s shoulders. Kingpin’s eyes flash with understanding, and he looks at Mineta with suspicion.

Mineta sputters in outrage, but four glares (including Forgery’s) silence him pretty quickly.

“Oh, come on guys. We’re in a party! We can’t be fighting now, can we?” says Kingpin, cheerfully pleading with wide puppy-dog eyes. The three other members of the polysquad melt under the expression and nod.

“Mineta-kun, could you stop saying those things to people, especially if they’re uncomfortable?” requests Kingpin earnestly taking a few steps towards Mineta. “You wouldn’t want to be *expelled* , would you?”

Feedback’s skin crawls at Kingpin’s words. He’s talking normally, his

voice just as earnest and casual as before, but there's a sharpness to his smile, a glint of cunning in his eyes that just gives a whole new meaning to the words.

Mineta doesn't seem to pick up all of the implications, so he just looks unnerved instead of terrified. He nods and speed-walks out the door, not looking back.

A few cheers break out in the room, and Pirate Radio decides to play victory music from the speakers while her counterpart presses a button that makes streamers pop out from behind the dj booth.

Forgery smiles and bends down (Feedback has to do a very conscious effort not to look at her boobs) so she's closer to the trio at the foot of the stage and says: "I could have dealt with him on my own, so why intervene?"

"You shouldn't have to, though," smiles Kingpin, rubbing a hand through the back of his head.

"It's true! He needs to choose his priorities or face the consequences," declares Hacker, winking playfully. Con Man nods solemnly with a small smile on his face.

Forgery laughs at the throwback and smiles wide at all of them, a lovestruck look on her face. She leans forward and kisses all three of them in turn, just quick pecks on the lips.

A few "awww" bloom out in the crowd, complete with clapping and even a few wolf-whistles from the more daring villains.

The heroes are a whole other story. Hatsume screams "You never told me about this!" from where she had been dismantling and improving a smoke-machine a few ways over.

Yaoyorozu, who had gone in the room just in time to see all of them kiss, is currently frozen with a hand to her mouth.

Mineta, who had peeked into the room after Yaoyorozu had started speaking, looks like he could chew glass out of pure envy, tears of blood streaming down his face. He keeps muttering "not fair, not fair, not fair," like a mantra, and Feedback's starting to be honestly concerned for his sanity.

Bakugou and Ashido start arguing loudly about something that Feedback can't honestly make out, Kirishima and Sero joining in

pretty soon after. Kaminari (wow, it's kinda creepy to think of yourself as someone else… did that make sense? Probably not) takes a few more seconds to stop staring and join the discussion.

Shinsou, from where he's looking in a corner of the party, looks on with a mixture of emotions Feedback can't pick out. It's like, annoyance, with a bit of betrayal plus envy? He's not even sure anymore.

"Wait, wait, wait, wait!" interrupts Setsuna, looking wide-eyed at all of them. "All three of them are your datemates? At the same time? Not, friends with benefits or flings, but actual datemates? Is that possible?"

The villains in the room just nod and and agree, casually, no big deal, while Setsuna gapes.

"You didn't know?" says… Ashido? (That has to be Ashido, what the hell), with hands on her hips.

"Huh?" says Setsuna, looking like she's currently re-evaluating everything in her life.

"Please, poly relationships have been common ever since 2056. Heck, you're looking at one right now," the acid user says, gesturing to the ENTIRE BAKUSQUAD? Nah, it can't be. Bakugou wouldn–

"I told you fuckers, nothing is romantic about sex. It's just an hellish itch that needs to be scratched." And just like that, Ibara went down, completely red in the face.

"Please, you know the rule, one of us has to be with your lover to join," said KAMINARI!? What the fuck?!?

"That's why he picked me bro," Kirishima said with an arm draped over his shoulder, planting a peck on the exploding man.

"Fuck off! You just do me the best." And just like that, Magdalene went down too.

"Hey, speaking of, you guys are in a relationship, right? How do you get someone like Kaminari to go to 4th base?" Sero asks Forgery, who ALSO went down.

Fuck. Oh fuck. There's no way this is happening.

Getting together with Mina/Drug-runner was nothing he hadn't thought of before, she really was amazing. Everybody had a crush on Kirishima/Tank, the guy was just that nice, so there wasn't any surprise there. He hadn't ever thought of Sero/Shibari that way before, but he had to admit it didn't sound half-bad.

But here's no way on Hell, Heaven or Earth he could have a crush on Bakugou or Powerhouse. Ever. Nuh-uh. The guy was just too… screamy and ragey and–

A flash of a memory played in his mind's eye, of the one time Powerhouse had licked his lips just before a fight with him.

Feedback's face exploded in a blush, and he hid his face in his hands, letting out a pitiful "noooooooooooo" all the while.

He starts when he feels a sudden influx of electricity on his elbow, and he whips up to see Kaminari with a smirk on his face, an arm around Bakugou's waist, winking at him.

'..How the hell am I going to talk to any of his friends without looking like a dumbass with a crush?!?'

(There's no way. Feedback is barely self-aware enough to know that.)

"Yo, Midoriya!" screams Sero, running towards him at full speed, narrowly dodging a flying chair. He has a bright orange stain dead-center on his chest, and a party hat is dangling lopsidedly from his head.

"Yeah?" Both counterparts answer at the same time, Kingpin's face peeking out from outside of the dorms. Kingpin notices his mistake and laughs nervously, while Izuku looks back at Sero and asks, "What is it?"

Sero takes a few deep breaths and begins to walk towards the door. "Well, uh, actually is to both of you but basically I think the Hatsumes put–"

"WATCH OUT MES AMIS!!!" screams one of the Aoyamas as they are

going out the door. A bright beam blasts over them and into the night, burning through a blob falling from the roof… which turns out to be full of maple syrup.

The three of them scream as they are showered from head to toe in sugary goop, along with Kaminari and Feedback who were talking nearby. Izuku can hear Monoma's laugh from above them, along with a few others, as they run away. The two electric guys went to shower among really loud protests.

"Oh, eew," says Sero, and Izuku is inclined to agree. Kingpin sighs and takes off his jacket, giving it to Izuku for a second as he wipes syrup from his face and out of his eyes. Izuku also takes off his jacket, using the underside of it to wipe his face off now that it is probably a lost cause.

"I'll go change. Be right back," says Kinping, and Izuku gives back his jacket, and says goodbye to Sero, who's still trying to wipe goop off of him.

As Izuku finally weaves through the sheer mass of bodies and enters the corridors, he can't help but wish that Monoma would be a little less confrontational. They were trying to get the two classes to work together! Pranks were not going to make things better for any of them.

"Wait!" rings out in the corridor, a bit more audibly not that he's away from the party. He faces the speaker by habit, and finds Dead Drop running towards him.

He opens his mouth to greet her, but then she screams; "I like you!"

Izuku freezes, looking at her reddening face.

"I really, really like you, Kingpin. Romantically, I mean! This has nothing to do with Drug-runner's plan, and you don't have to do anything about this if you don't want to, I know you kind of have your plate full with Con Man, and Hacker, and Forgery, but I still wanted to tell you!" she says, pausing to regain her breath, looking with wide, hopeful eyes at him.

Izuku opens his mouth. Closes it. Looks down and sideways, fidgets a little. Then he notices the red band tied on the jacket he's wearing. Which turns out to be *Kingpin's* jacket.

"Uhm, Dead Drop? I'm… not… Kingpin," he says, each word getting meeker and more apologetic.

Dead Drop's eyes widen and she turns pale, then blushes even more furiously than before and sinks to the ground with her face in her hands. That's exactly how Izuku feels right about now.

"Waaaaait! He's not–" bursts Uraraka from the doors at the far end of the corridor, Kingpin a few steps behind her, also blushing but remarkably put together. "Oh, you already did it," she finishes once she looks at the two of them, and laughs nervously.

"You like me, Uraraka-chan?!?" exclaims Izuku, his voice breaking embarrassingly right at the end.

They stare at all each other, all four of them, blushing and stuttering and generally being awkward and absolutely clueless in this kind of situation. Izuku wordlessly gives Kingpin his jacket, and Kingpin gives his back.

'Beep, beep, beep, beep–'

Kingpin scrambles to turn off the alarm, and Izuku checks the time, finding it to be 11:45 pm. Where did the time go?

Kingpin clears his throat and says: "So, uhm. Can I think about this, and give you an answer tomorrow?" He nervously wipes his hands on his pants.

"Me too," says Izuku, taking the opportunity.

Both Urarakas nod, and Kingpin smiles gratefully, before saying: "Come on, everybody has to go to the main tent outside!" And sprints away from all of them.

The four of them run into the garden, where most other First Years are already at. Kingpin keeps running, jumping onto the stage and grabbing the mic that Jirou offers him.

They wait a few more minutes, until everybody is gathered there.

"So, how was the party? Did all of you have fun?" he asks nervously, and almost gets bowled over from the force of 83 screaming voices cheering together.

"So, we have to stop the party at midnight–" A chorus of 'boos' and protests breaks out from the crowd, but a few of the more kind and/or rule-abiding ones begin shushing everybody. "–Yeah, so, uhm, we had kind of one more thing planned for tonight, though."

Kingpin looks very high-strung under the stares of curiosity, and Izuku sympathizes with him, because talking is *hard.*

But, Kingpin takes a deep breath and closes his eyes for a moment. When he opens them, he smiles, a bit more lopsidedly than before.

“As all of you know, tomorrow start the preparation days for the UA War,” he says, gesticulating towards the crowd as excited murmurs begin to break out in it.

“This party was not only a fun celebration, but a farewell…” he lets the pause drag on, as people begin to murmur about who could be going away. Kingpin simply smiles and states:

“A farewell to our friendship.”

Izuku blinks and shrieks “what?!?” without meaning to.

“We have talked, and got to know our counterparts these last few days, befriend them and simply get along. That is over as soon as dawn comes up tomorrow.”

The villains move up towards the right of the tent, as if they had planned this all along. The heroes instinctively move to the left. There’s an empty space, a no-man’s land, dividing the two groups.

“Iida, Kendo, could you both come on-stage?” asks Kingpin, and personally helps them up and gestures for Pirate Radio to hand them both a microphone.

“This is a declaration of war,” proclaims Kingpin. From the corner of his eye, Izuku sees Con Man blush, and look annoyed while a corner of his lips quirked up. Shinsou just looks done with everything.

“We, the Hero Class Villains, promise to do our best in the upcoming UA War. For the entire duration of it, we will be your worst enemies,” states Kingpin, shoulders squared and head held high.

“And we, the True Heroes, promise to do our best too,” says Kendo, while Iida nods beside her. Both of them bow, and Kingpin follows suit, among the shouts of excitement of the crowd.

SCREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

The crowd screams and clutches their ears at the sudden ear-splitting screech coming from the speakers. As one, every turns to the dj booth

to see two very pissed off Aizawas.

‘How did they even get there?!?’ thinks Izuku, amazed that a room full of hero trainees had all missed them come in.

“Go. To. *Sleep* ,” says Eraserhead, while Aizawa holds up his phone showing 12:03 am.

There’s a second of stillness.

Then the room bursts with running kids as they scramble to get back into their rooms. Izuku decides to jump into his through the window, and falls asleep as soon as his head hits the pillow. (It will only be the next day when he realizes he forgot to change his clothes, when he wakes up to find his bed smeared with maple syrup.)

Chapter End Notes

> We have officially ended the honeymoon of this story. Shit starts to get real after this.

From Scratch

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Notes

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Hagakure groaned as she gained consciousness. She had a massive headache, felt disoriented, and had many other symptoms that normally came from drugs, as she once learned in class. There wasn't class today, so maybe she could sleep in...

She grabbed her pillow with her eyes still closed and pulled it in a snuggle. '… why does it feel so itchy?' she thought as she opened her eyes, which hurt from the strain. She looked down to the top of a head. '... Did I SLEEP with someone last night!' She screamed in her head, but kept an actual scream under wraps.

'Ok, calm down. First step, figuring out who this IS!' She noticed the blond color. 'Denki? No, his hair has those black lines in them. Bakugou … dear GOD I hope not. That leaves Aoyama and Ojiro.' She had to pause for a minute. 'Please be Ojiro, that would somehow be the least awkward one.' The head shifted, causing her to stiffen. The face lifted to reveal … Monoma! He groaned as he-

'Don't wake up. Don't wake up. Don't wake up.' He woke up. He blinked for a couple seconds before sitting up. Why wasn't he-oh right, she was invisible. This situation could still be salvaged then. All she had to do was sneak out before she was-he aimed to grab the edge of the bed to push himself up … he grabbed her chest instead. He paused and looked confused as she processed this for a couple seconds.

"AAAAAHHHHHH!!!" She slapped him as she jumped out of the bed. She was VERY glad these rooms were sound proof.

"Ow what the hell. Who's there!?" Monoma asked, trying to nurse his wound.

"I'm Hagakure! The invisible girl from 1-A! What the hell were you

doing in my bed!?"

"ME!? Why would I go into some 1-A trash's roo-" He stopped as he shifted the sheets, causing her *shirt* fall on the floor. She looked down and-thank god she had her skirt on, and Monoma seemed to have his pants on, given he was willing to stand.

It was then they looked calm enough to look around said room.

Awards, pictures of 1-B, fine furniture, and a conspiracy board on how to get rid of 1-A, mainly focusing on Bakugou. Yeah, this was his room. "... I grab my things and leave, and we never speak of this again?"

"Agreed." It was then they both wondered, what the HELL did they have last night?

When the other UA had said their friendship would be frozen in their hearts during the War against their doppelgangers, Tokoyami hadn't envisioned it would be quite so drastic.

He wandered down the halls amidst a sea of people, and where before a member of the other timeline would cross his path and greet him, they all continued on their journey without so much as acknowledging his presence.

It was jarring, a discordant note in his day whenever it happened. Nevertheless, he persisted, for he would not let petty actions be the executioners to his mood. He simply hurried his movements towards his destined destination; the gym the "heroes" (as he should be distinguishing his UA from it's mirror) had booked for this very evening.

When he arrived, it was already full, for most of his classmates were quite enamored with the idea of the War. Tokoyami himself couldn't blame them, for he was just as drawn to it as well.

He made his way towards the Paragons, who were, with the help of volunteers such as Yaoyorozu, Shiozaki and Midoriya, cataloguing each and everybody's abilities, specialties and Quirks.

Shiozaki noticed him coming and greeted him with a polite nod. “Welcome, Tokoyami. We are currently doing assessments. Please go to the back of the line,” she said, and gestured for him to head to a corner of the gym.

Tokoyami complied, heading towards the very end of the line which, in a coincidence almost serendipitous in nature, was composed of the 1-B ghouls. He hadn’t had much reason to interact with them in the past, but since the War began he had found himself growing to enjoy their company.

“We were waiting for you,” said the ghostly Yanagi Reiko, tucking a strand of her white hair behind her ear absently. “Why did you take so long, if I’m not rude asking?”

“Temptation proved far too powerful for a flawed being such as me,” intoned Tokoyami, taking his place beside the group.

“So you couldn’t resist eating more caramel apples,” teased Kuroiro, his skin looking like a black blot against the pristine, light-grey walls.

Tokoyami, averted his gaze in embarrassment, but knew he meant no harm to his person, so he nodded despite his words.

Both Yanagi and Kuroiro chuckled, and Tokoyami asked "where is Juzo?"

Kuroiro pointed towards one corner of the gym, and soon all three of them turned to watch the rest of their classmates.

“What is the methodology of this endeavor?” ventured to ask Tokoyami.

Yanagi pointed at the beginning of the line, and explained: “They have a sort of exercise station system, where everyone has to fulfill a task and the results are catalogued. The first one over there–” She gestured where Kamakiri, the bug-guy from 1-B was standing talking towards a camera. “–Is simply describing what your Quirk is, what it can do, limitations, those sorts of things. When you’re done with that, you move to the next one, which is a stealth exercise, and then you move on to the next one, which is a dodging exercise, and so on and so forth.”

Tokoyami nodded to himself, seeing the efficiency in such a system. He then noticed a peculiar detail.

“Are the cameras remembering what we do?” asks Tokoyami while watching the electrical devices in question positioned along the entirety of the gym, pointed at each and every task.

“They want to have the footage so they can analyze it more calmly later,” explains Yanagi, and the three of them fall into a comfortable silence once more.

That is one of the elements Tokoyami enjoys most about his tentative friendship with the ghouls. Unlike his more rambunctious classmates, they feel no need to shatter the silence with idle chatter, and instead embrace it for the undisturbed void that it is. Though the noisy atmosphere in the room could hardly be called “silent”, his point still stands.

Abruptly, Kuroiro nudges him with his elbow, causing Tokoyami to look in the direction of the door, where Kojiro Bondo, the glue giant, stepped in, followed by Fukidashi Manga, who had an exclamation mark depicted on his speech-bubble face.

“Everyone! We got the full rules now!” said Manga, passing the thin rulebook to Iida, who started reading it as fast as he could.

The activities in the gym ceased, people’s attention far too enraptured with the rulebook to continue their tasks, and instead people walked closer to their leader.

“Do we have any copies?” asked Kendo towards the pair that had entered the gym moments before. Kojiro nodded, and silently removed a backpack from his person, showing a veritable collection of rulebooks.

“All of you will have to read it completely after this,” began Kendo, passing notebooks to people, until everybody had one. “However, now that we’re here, let’s go over the general parameters. Iida, if you could?”

He nodded and read aloud: “The heroes' main objective is to capture the Kingpin and bring him in alive for questioning. Doing so results in an automatic win, regardless of other conditions.

However, if the prior goal is not met, to receive extra credits, two out of three of these goals must be met: the heroes keep collateral damage under 50%, heroes keep Civl-bot loss of life under 50%–”

Many eyebrows climbed up to hairlines at hearing such low numbers

on the goals. If that wasn't a red flag, then Tokoyami was naught but a fool.

"–and keep hero reputation over 50%," said Iida, who muttered "reputation?" to himself, before finishing: "The loss conditions for the heroes are to finish the UA War with only one of the objectives, to be driven out of the city or completely eliminated.

He took a deep breath and continued: "Two new elements have been added to the UA War, which hadn't been present in the Civil War.

The first is a reputation mechanic. Because of improved AI in the robots that will be used during the War, it was possible to program them to behave differently according to the heroes' actions. If the heroes attend press conferences, solve issues with villains quickly and efficiently, and generally keep up a good image, bots will act more cooperatively towards them and give more information willingly. The opposite is true if the heroes fail to keep up a good image."

Murmurs broke out in the crowd, a few looking more than worried at the new challenge, others rather excited. Tokoyami disliked this particular challenge. Standing in front of a crowd of onlookers, forced to answer each and every question while blasted with harsh fluorescent light at all times? Press conferences where not exactly the best place for a creature of the night to be.

"The second, is a superweapon that is hidden somewhere in the field for the exercise, and its location will only be made known in the dawn of the third day of the UA War.

This weapon will be, by default, in the service of the heroes by midday of the third day–"

"Hell yeah!" screamed Ashido, which everybody took as a cue to start cheering. It took Iida multiple minutes to stop the noise, and it was only possible at the end by Jirou blasting everybody with an incredibly high-pitched sound, not unlike the wail of a banshee.

"Thank you, Jirou-san. As I was saying– of the third day. However, the villain team can also obtain this weapon for themselves manually, by gathering clues for a password throughout the other two days.

That the villains obtaining the superweapon is not grounds for automatic failure, however, the chances of the hero team succeeding after the fact are so small that it is practically impossible."

“Just what is this superweapon–” says Kodai, with a hand to her chin. “–that it would be powerful enough to wipe out all of us so thoroughly?”

Tokoyami can hear speculation begging to bloom among his classmates, and he can admit his own mind is occupied in searching for such a thing.

“I don’t fucking care about how powerful it is!” screams Bakugou drawing everyone’s attention to him and his aggressive posture. “I just want to hear how the fuck we’re going to keep those fuckers from getting it.”

“I might have a few ideas,” says Midoriya, gripping one of those notebooks Tokoyami has seen him carry around lately.

“I kinda do too,” says Juzo, and walks over to the two Paragons, and Sen and Awase are quick to follow, chattering away at possibilities.

“We’ll add a station at the end for people’s ideas,” decides Kendo, and looks over to Iida for objections, which she doesn’t get.

The both of them usher people back into the lines and stations, while Kojiro issues out the remaining rulebooks.

As Tokoyami is given his rulebook, he notices how there’s a stamp on one of the sides proclaiming “hero edition”. That gets him wondering, what kind of rules did their counterparts get?

They grab a handed out schedule, which shows training and meeting times for them. Seems to be personalized (Probably by Izuku and Kendo) for each person's needs, including rest and recharge times. There was even decent periods for socialization and sleep. It was pretty impressive.

He saw Sero grin out of the corner of his eye. “So, guess we have the nights to ourselves, eh Denki?” Sero said with a wink to the electric boy, causing him to blush and stutter.

“O-oh yeah, of course!” he said nervously, causing Bakugou to sigh.

“You’re the villain Sparky aren’t you?” He asked, causing the heroes to freeze and widen their eyes.

Feedback rubbed the back of his head before nodding. “I just woke up without my headband. It must have gotten switched after that syrup

thing. I didn't say anything because Ashido just dragged me here and then I got kinda nervous, haha," he finishes lamely.

It was then a thought hit Tokoyami.

"Wait. If you're here, then where is our Kaminari?" There was a silence before he saw Izuku's eyes go as wide as plates. In an instant, he jumped out the window with his Quirk.

"... You know, we really should ask how they manage to get those windows done," said Uraraka.

"Not today, I still have a headache from the party," Said Sato

Tokoyami looked with an eyebrow raised towards him. "You have one as well? What a mad banquet of darkness."

He noticed Sero shoot up. "Oh right, I forgot to tell you guys that Hatsumei and Hacker put something in the punch last night." There was an intense anger directed at the boy.

"Oh you are SO getting it latter," said Bakugou with a glare, but also with a smirk that sent shivers down half the groups spines.

"–and the metal just *warped* like it was plastic held over a flame, it was fantastic! Power Loader's yelling was completely worth it." Hacker's eyes sparkled with excitement as she bounced around.

Smuggler was seriously confused as to how she could move around so much without paying attention to her surroundings, and still not fall. Hit many things on the way, definitely, but fall? Not at all.

"And! And, and, and there's this great, super amazing Baby I just made for Temperance! It's so *great* to make things for him because he's such a blank canvas! It has like, like, these hidden compartments everywhere and– You know what? I'll just show it to all of you before we take my things to the new lab!" she exclaims suddenly, and begins running towards the Support Labs.

She grabs the handle and pulls … it's locked. "Oh, right. I forgot the key." She pulls out a pink card with a key-like shape labeled 'Inventor'

and puts it over the scanner … causing the screen to go red and an 'ACCESS DENIED' to appear. "Oh, my," Hacker says with slight panic as she tries to jiggle the door handle. "It seems my card is outdated. Better get it fixed."

Suddenly, as she reluctantly let go, a message pops up on the screen of the card reader, displaying in bold letters "READ THE RULES".

"Huh?" says Overdose, scratching his head somewhat comically. "Did they release the rules already?"

A whirr of wheels comes from the end of the corridor, and Overdose and Condense, the two that came with them to do the transferring of the heavy machinery, have to move to the side to let one of the bots that roam around the school through.

It simply shoves the book into Condense's hands, and the glue giant simply nods as a way of thanks and opens the book in the beginning.

Smuggler attempts to move to read the book, but he underestimated how tall Condense is, since he has to step on his tiptoes to see anything. It's impossible to read like that, so instead Smuggler takes one of the pebbles he always takes with him, and idly uses his Quirk on them, softening and letting them go back to normal again and again.

Condense suddenly looks towards Overdose, pointing towards a passage in the rules. Overdose takes it carefully and begins reading.

The book looks comically small compared to the two of them, Smuggler finds, but he tries not to smile since people have told him he looks creepy when he smiles. He can't help he looks as if he were smiling 24/7, and he can't definitely control just how weird his mouth looks when he grins.

Overdose's eyebrows suddenly shoot up, and he says: "Guys, I have bad news."

He glances nervously towards Hacker, but then begins reading out loud:

"In spirit of keeping things as realistic as possible, the villains won't have access to UA resources during the entirety of the UA War. That includes raw materials, facilities and/or information.

The only way to obtain those resources is to *justify* with research

exactly how a criminal organization could have attained them *without* alerting the authorities.

Failure to comply with this rules will result in automatic failure of the UA War."

Hatsumei went silent, shaking violently with a pale face. "Um, Hacker? Are you … ok–"

"MY BABIES!" The pink haired girl tried to rush and bang on the door. "GIVE ME BACK MY BABIES YOU MONSTERS!" Smuggler, Condense, and Overdose all grabbed and restrained her as they dragged her back, her nails scratching the ground like a file as they struggled. "GIVE ME BACK MY BEAUTIFUL BABIES YOU FUCKERS! YOU CAN'T EXPECT THEM TO BE OK ON THEIR OWN!"

She then threw out some Bakugou level cursing as they dragged her to the "villain HQ", students looking at them weirdly, teachers looking with sympathy. They finally dragged her in the room, with Feedback looking like he's seen a ghost for some reason. "You ok?" Smuggler asked.

The electric man went out of his daze as he looked at him. "Oh yeah, just … feeling weird from last night."

He noticed how Hacker seemed to struggle less, not out of acceptance, but because of the dark, gloomy cloud that had become Hacker's mood.

"What's going on?" asks Singularity, frowning milimetrically.

Smuggler simply doesn't have the words to tell him of the clusterfuck, so he simply shoves the rulebook into his hands, open in the correct (how Smuggler wished it wasn't) page, and tells him: "Just, read this aloud to everybody."

Kingpin, who had finally managed to get to where Smuggler was through the curious crowd of onlookers and heard Smuggler's last comment, clapped to get everyone's attention. "Boys, girls, and Powerhouse–"

"Why the fuck do I keep getting singled out during that!?" said the aforementioned boy.

"The rules are finally here, and there's apparently, some that isn't agreeing with our resident mad scientist."

Hacker didn't even twitch at her favorite nickname. She just stays in the corner muttering 'Babies' over and over, poor girl.

"Singularity, if you will." Kingpin nods at Singularity, who begins to read the rulebook with perfect enunciation, but in a monotone voice.

Drug-runner is one of the first to get what the rules are saying, and sputters in outrage. "My tanks! I won't' be able to use my acid tanks!"

"Shit, the guns!"

"My light-up cloak is now lost to regulations,"

"Damn, is my voice-modulator included?"

"The cars! How are we going to justify the cars! Fuck, I was not prepared for this!"

"How are we going to get comms? Or signal jammers? Computers advanced enough for hacking into government databases?!?"

"Hell, do we know how to explain where to get the materials for our *costumes* . Aren't those things, like, super regulated?"

" *All* of Kingpin's updated gear, crap, those were made of a lot of rare materials. What the hell–"

"Are we going to have to do fucking *essays* about this shit?!?" screams Powerhouse, which makes everybody stare in bafflement.

"Is that really what you're worried about?!?" asks Feedback, who then covers shuts his mouth and looks like he wants to melt into the wall.

That strikes Smuggler as something weird, since he swore Feedback was the kind of guy to say very stupid things, very confidently.

Kingpin frowns. "No Power, we're going to have to do *research* , not just another three argument long essay."

Kingpin stands up, going up to the wall covered in their plans, most of them in code, and sighing. "–It seems the rules we have to follow have come in, leaving our strategies needing to change." Kingpin said as he pulled out one of his many notebooks, and started scrawling wildy "I expected as much. Nedzu never keeps two exams the same, after all. But I don't think any of us were prepared for a change in this scale."

Kingpin shut his notebook with a click, and started to carefully

dismantle the planning wall, sorting each item into orderly piles for consideration.

Smuggler had the sinking feeling in his stomach that at least half of all the plans they had made until now had to be discarded completely.

“Why can’t Larceny and I make everything?” Everyone turned to Forgery, who had spoken with a confident voice, Larceny nodding beside her.

“Because the pure amount of raw materials is too much to make with a limited food supply,” Overdose states like a matter of fact.

Kingpin puts his hand to his chin. “It is one reason. But, as long as we can justify said materials with research, we can get as much as we want, without having to use both of you as living factories.” There was a silence along with some nods.

“Then what’s the problem?” said Tank, smiling wide enough so all his sharp teeth were in plain view.

“Listen, fucker,” says Powerhouse, probably intending to explain only to Tank what was going on, but he always talked loud enough for everyone to hear. “The problem here is *time* . We can get the shit we need, but before, it took twenty seconds to order a shit-ton of steel, and now we need at least *three fucking hours* to get it. And the more suspicious the shit we need looks, the longer it takes,” he states rudely yet simply. He then points outright towards the Creation Duo. “And these two fuckers could just make the shit, but that would mean they don’t get any fucking time to train or learn, and what happens if they get eliminated and shit breaks in the War? Stand around like idiots? No, we have to balance this clusterfuck before shit hits the fan.”

Iida tilts his glasses. “I can offer a decent bulk of the written work, if all of you are willing to help,” he says earnestly, looking standing in the spotlight of the villain’s attention.

“I know exactly where to find a lot of construction materials!” exclaims Dead Drop, cheerfully bouncing.

“And I have an idea on how to find the comms,” says Pirate Radio.

“But wait, I know Madame Hacker is fabuleux at her craft, but to make *everyone’s* gear in the timespan of a few days with seulement materials?” The Sparkle asks, twinkling with worry.

There is an ominous chuckling as the villains slowly turn to the corner their computer expert laid, only to find her slowly rising to her feet. “You didn’t think fun times were the only *benefit* of being my lover, did you?” she said with as she turned to them with wicked grin.

Smuggler looked over at Feedback, who was blushing pretty hard. Weird, he should have been used to this behavior.

“I’ve been teaching her SO many things. She can now produce much more complex equipment. If we bring the blueprints … she can do half my work with just her production skill! The only problem is–”

“You need time to make all the blueprints from scratch,” Kingpin interrupted with a knowing look. “I think I have some ideas, but I need to revise them. We could do away with some equipment for a few people, but those that get gear would be expected to get into more difficult situations,” He said as he rearranged the board around. “Therefore, we need to focus on an assault team.” he said, majority of students taking a glance at Powerhouse.

“Speaking of, I’m not gonna be at the next couple of meetings, so have Tank tell me anything important,” grouched Powerhouse, taking a seat and crossing his arms

“What could be more important?” Kingpin asked with a look.

“Actually, I can justify this one,” said Hacker. “The gear he requested is good, but it requires so much sweat it would likely kill him if we did it all in one day.” Some students turn green at the thought of massive amounts sweat being used at ammo, some curious, and others paled at the level of destruction he could be capable of. “But fear not, for it will be done fast enough for the other students to get their gear in a timely fashion, for I am, the great HATSUME MEI!”

There was a silence. “Feedback, you were supposed to put some sparks behind me!” Hacker whined.

“Oh,” he said, too panicked to seem normal. “Sorry about that.”

“I haven’t seen you this distracted since you fried your brain and got taken out by Smuggler’s Quirk last Civil War,” remarks Con Man, and Smuggler almost asks about what the hell is going on, but he catches the suspicion in Con Man’s eyes, so he decides to play along.

“He’s right, dude. Did I hit you too hard again, or something?” Smuggler’s acting is not the best, but with how nervous Feedback

looks, it shouldn't be much of an issue.

"No! No, I'm just– I'm ok guys, really–" Feedback's eyes unfocus, and all his nervousness melts into eerie calm.

"Why are you wearing the wrong headband Denki?" Con Man asked.

"I woke up with it on, didn't notice until I was dragged here," he replied robotically.

"Must have been during that ... syrup incident," Kingpin remembered, causing him and Dead Drop to blush for some reason.

Drug-runner, unties the red band off of his head, which still smells slightly like maple syrup.

Smuggler is absolutely not sorry for that prank. At all.

"So, he's been listening on everything say. We should probably have him forget everything he heard," Singularity stated calmly.

"Or we could interrogate him," Prism brought up.

"It's Denki. What could he *possibly* know that's important," PR asked sarcastically.

"We could ask about that little get together last night," Shibari said.

"Oh, is the gang curious on the *nightly* acti–" Larceny would have continued his taunt if it wasn't for a small sparkle bringing to his attention the four DANGEROUS attacks aimed at him. "–I'll shut up now."

"Fine, let's just get it over with." Con man said lazily as he turned to their captive. "What's the relationship between–" He was interrupted by a spark of green lightning jumping through a window. Weren't those closed?

"Sorrywrongguyswitchupgottagobye!" The green haired hero said in a rush as he jumped in from the *fucking window what the hell.* He grabbed Kaminari bridal style, which caused Con Man's control to break. Midoriya then and dashed out the door, Kaminari shrieking from his arms.

There was a silence before a snap drew them to Kingpin, who has holding a piece of broken chalk *very* tightly in his hand.

“Today is not my fucking day,” Their boss muttered.

The door bursts open, the real Feedback coming through it panting, and shouts: “What did I miss?!?”

Kingpin sighs, accepting that this whole war is going to be bullshit from start to finish, and announces: “Come on, everybody. We have a lot of work to do,” and closes the door with one final click.

Together and Appart

Chapter by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW

Chapter Notes

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Izuku looked around nervously as he closed the closet door behind him. There was no one else in there … yet his panic was only increasing.

“Uraraka confessed. Uraraka confessed! URARAKA SAID SHE LIKES ME! How do I deal with this? She’s gonna come in any minute and I don’t know what to do! I know I said meet in between 2nd and 3rd period this morning, but I could have thought up of something to say by then! Why was I distr– oh yeah, the Denki thing.

Oh my god, what do I say! I like her, I definitely think I like her, but I’ve never dated anyone before! What do you do on dates?!? Where do I get the time to go on dates?!? Wait how much time do I have before she arri– TWO MINUTES?!? I still don’t know what to say! I really don’t want to freeze, why did I get myself into this?!? What–”

“It’s fine Deku,” he froze as he slowly turned to the source, showing Ochako next to the door.

‘She overheard!’ he thought and buried his head in his hands, trying to get his face to stop burning from embarrassment.

“If, uh, if it makes you feel any– any better, I have *no idea what I’m doing either!* ” she says, her voice raising a few octaves at the end.

Izuku raises his head, and finds that she’s blushing just as much as him, rubbing the back of her head and laughing nervously.

She takes a deep breath and enters slowly, looking at him and then looking away shyly. She seats herself beside Izuku, not close enough to touch but definitely enough to make Izuku’s heart beat faster.

‘Get it together!’ thinks Izuku. ‘You’ve been this close to her before, and you were fine then!... But then again, they weren’t inside a supply closet with the door almost closed.’

Izuku blushes a darker shade of red and curls himself into a flustered ball of nerves.

“I should probably have said this earlier, but “what does a cockatoo say?””

Izuku immediately recognizes the question as the password they had given to all of the heroes so a Kaminari-Feedback incident doesn’t happen again.

“He says “hello, dear listeners!”” Izuku answers.

There’s a second of silence, and then both of them burst out into giggles. It had been Awase’s idea to use the “Present Mic is a cockatoo” joke as a password, and soon enough everyone single password they had created was a joke about one of their teachers.

Their laughter little by little dies down, though Uraraka snorts again and it sends them both back into a fit of laughter. When they *finally* calm down, Izuku’s very glad they chose such silly passwords.

Here, laughing like ten-year olds inside a closet, is what reminds Izuku that Uraraka, before she had been his crush, she had been his *friend* . Dating or no dating, that would never change. So, instead of thinking he had to talk to his crush, he simply thought of it as talking to Uraraka, the first friend he had ever made.

(Kacchan doesn’t count. He had been there practically since day one, so they were friends by default. Izuku never had to go out of his way to befriend him)

“So, uh, about... this,” begins Izuku inelegantly, and swallows. “I also feel the same way you do.”

Uraraka whips around so fast Deku’s afraid she might have pulled something. She’s staring wide-eyed at him, almost as if she can’t believe what she just heard.

“And I would like to date you,” blurts out Izuku before he can change his mind.

Uraraka smiles, happiness shining through her face like a sunny day, and she hugs Izuku suddenly.

Izuku freezes for a second, but then relaxes into her arms and lets himself enjoy her warmth. He puts his arms around her too, and both

of them stay there, with flushed faces, listening to each other's heartbeats.

"Ah, jeune amour! Sparkling like moi."

Both of them startle and jump apart, looking at the blond who pulled the door open, sparkling at them with smugness.

"Do not worry, mes amies! Your secret is safe with me," says Aoyama and winks, before doing a weird half-twirl, half-flourish. "Though you might want to hurry! The others will start to wonder where both of you are soon~"

Aoyama says something in French neither of them can understand and waves them goodbye as he disappears down the hall.

"That was embarrassing!" says Uraraka cheerfully, and stands up, smoothing out her skirt and hair. She offers her hand to Izuku and says: "Let's go! We have things to do!"

Izuku takes her hand gratefully, and blushes hard as she doesn't let go, and instead weaves their fingers together.

The brief minutes holding hands in the hallways were definitely worth the teasing both of them got when they arrived at the classroom, their hands still intertwined.

Kingpin had a smile on him almost as large as his mask.

It was disturbing to Dart to say the least. By the looks of everyone else at the lunch table, they shared her sentiments. Except for Singularity, he was like her in having difficulty showing his emotions.

Even then, Singularity kept glancing at Kingpin's smile, then back again at the sheet of paper where they had written down everything that Feedback found out with his brief, unplanned stint as a spy, then back towards his plate of food.

Finally, Singularity sighed and went up to Kingpin, and lightly shook his shoulder.

Kingpin blinked and looked at Singularity, still looking a bit disoriented from having sunk himself so deep into his own mind, but realized what he was doing and began to blush.

Dart could never understand how their leader could go from ominous and terrifying to incredibly adorable in the span of a few seconds. She wasn't complaining about it though, and by the slight upwards twitching of Todoroki's lips, he wasn't complaining either.

The green-haired villain cleared his throat awkwardly, and the eyes of everyone in the room suddenly fixed on him.

"Everybody who hasn't finished reading the rules, please raise your hands!"

No one raised them.

Wait, no. There was one. Extortion was raising her hand, but with a cheeky smile that made it clear she was joking.

Multiple people snorted, someone threw a rulebook at her, which she caught and made the show of throwing away behind her shoulder.

"Well then, here's another one .... who remembers the last team before us to get to the fifteenth objective?"

Only the original villains raised their hands on that one.

"I should probably explain then. After the Civil War, we found out through a bit of research that before us there was a villain team that split into two groups. One was intelligence, the other was defense … I think we should do something similar."

We divide our effort in training and planning in two teams. The 'destruction' team's goal is to be a distraction. Still not sure who I'm going to put in charge of it though."

There was a bark of rude laughter. Dart turned to see Powerhouse as the source, who was grinning with certainty.

"You're not leading, Power, for a multitude of reasons," shot back Kingpin, frowning at him.

"Enlighten me," growled the blond, as his cocky mockery turned into a glare.

"First off, you've proven you can't lead the last time this happened."

At that, Powerhouse looked close to snapping and blowing up everyone there. “There’s also the concern of you being distracted lately.”

“What the *hell* makes you assume I’m distracted fucking nerd?” Powerhouse grumbled loudly, trying to make sure he wasn’t screaming before they were overheard. Kingpin looked at him with annoyance before pointing his thumb behind him. Dart followed the direction and saw, through the window, the hero Bakusquad being close. There was cuddling, slight groping when they ‘thought’ no one was looking, and a couple pecks on cheeks. Bakugou seemed distant, as usual, but also seemed … closer (ish) to them than Powerhouse.

“You don’t fucking get to lecture *me* on that,” he said, pointing at Dead Drop, who was busy staring at the new couple of Izuku and Ochako. Everyone knew it was obvious before, but it was still adorable to see them feeding each other.

“I think the destruction team could work with him as the leader. They just need to be quick on their feet and react fast, they don’t need complicated plans!” said Tank cheerfully where he sat beside Powerhouse.

A few people nodded along, but most of them looked hesitant, and quite a few looked outright disgusted.

Powerhouse balled his fists until his knuckles were white, his nails drawing a bit of blood.

“His biggest weakness in the Civil War was how he was going directly against you, and you knew him far too well. As long as he acts as a field commander more than a strategist, he’ll do fine,” Singularity said, drawing a few looks of surprise, but he himself looked stoic.

Kingpin stared at Singularity from a second, his mind certainly working a mile a minute, then let out an exhausted sigh. “Fine, he can lead the destruction team.” There was a general nod of acceptance, mixed with a few looks of concern. “Now, let’s talk about the other team.” Kingpin went right back to smiling. “While the destruction team acts as a distraction, the construction team is free to do other objectives that don’t require much muscle, and allows us to focus on the more … *unique* aspects of our quirks.”

Murmurs of excitement spread in the crowd of the villains.

“Now, I’ve compiled a list based off of stats and quirks for everyone

and who's team their in." He finishes his paper as he hands it over to Singularity, who starts to pass it around after reading. Dart grabs it as she looks over for her name. Looks like she's in the creation team.

After a while, it's handed back to Kingpin. "Now we need go give schedules and regimens to the teams. But first … we have–" Kingpin checked his watch "–five minutes left for lunch."

There was a pause before the entire villain team rushed to finish their food.

"Kacchan, I don't think it's a good idea to spread the team that thin," said the green-haired kid with the freckles, his voice hesitant but with an almost imperceptible undercurrent of annoyance.

"We fucking can. Those shits will probably split their teams too and hide in the field like rats. There's just too many *not* to split," grumbles out the blonde, his hands stuffed as deep into his pockets as they go.

'What an odd combination of students! Were they paired for a group assignment?' she thought as she stopped walking.

"We'll get picked off one by one! You heard Kaminari, they don't have access to gear, they'll probably try to play it safe and use hit-and-run tactics," the shorter of the two argued, but flinched when the angry-looking one whipped his head around to look at him.

"And having too many people too close makes them easy targets! We have to make the fuckers struggle for each and every kill they try to make. Tire them out. We have the goddam luxury of gear, grape stain bait, a pre-made base and a system of fast alert. It makes sense to *use that shit against them* ."

"And we are going to do that!" He mutters something about 'despite ethical' something. "But I think that overwhelming them with power and numbers to shave down *their* numbers might give us the advantage we need to win the War!"

This captures her attention. She walks towards them with a spring in her step.

“Hey, sorry, excuse me. Are you both of you first years?” Both boys turn towards her, slightly startled.

“Yeah, what about it Extra?” barks Angry Blond.

“Oh, like extra personality? Such a cool nickname! Thank you!”she says. She’s pretty sure he didn’t mean it as a compliment, but nothing’s stopping her from taking it as one!

Angry blond blinks before groaning. “Oh, fuck. Not another one of you! I already have four, I don’t need five!” he shouts.

“... Contex?” she asks, confused.

“I think he just kinda doesn’t like bright and cheerful people, since he’s already around some of them all the time,” explains Green Hair.

“Ooooh, that makes sense! … What was it that I wanted to ask? I forgot– oh yeah! Are you guys participating in the UA War? That’s what it’s called right?”

Both of them nod, a bit surprised at the question, and that’s all the invitation she needs!

“That’s so cool! Is it fun? Do you guys like it? I really want to know more about it! There has been some talk of the other classes getting to watch it and it would be so exciting! And–”

The green hair blinked. “Oh god, she *is* another one,” he muttered. He then shook his head and stuttered: “Wh– What’s your name?”

“Oh, it’s–”

RIIIIIIIIIIIING

Oh crap!

“Sorry I gotta go!!!” she says, and runs from the confused pair. She feels bad about not telling them her name, but she *really* can’t afford to be late!

She’ll just have to track them down later, they seemed so interesting!

Signs of the Begining

Chapter Notes

> (A machine in the corner goes haywire before exploding, revealing a grey energy being.) Hello everyone! I'm Hazzard. Crystal was gone for the weekend, so I'm updating this chapter. It may be sure, but we hope you enjoy!
>
> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Kyoka sweated as she walked to the door. ‘I can’t believe i’m DOING THIS! He’s in a relationship, what right do I have to ask if I can … oh this is stupid.’ She stopped as she planned on turning around, but was pulled out of her thoughts by Sero walking out the door.

He blinks when he spots her. “Jirou? What are you doing here?”

“I was– I wanted, so, uhm. Fuck,” Kyoka took a deep breath and looked away to hide her reddened cheeks. “I… I want to ask Kaminari out.”

“Uuuh, and why are you telling me this?” he asks, and Kyoka can’t believe how dense he is.

“Because he’s your boyfriend? And I didn’t want to become a homewrecker for your, uh, group?”

Sero stares at her.

Kyoka is about to ask what the matter is, but then Sero slaps a hand to his forehead. He then starts to gesture for her to go in the room, and Kyoka follows confusedly.

She enters to find the Bakusquad being lovey-dovey in one way or another, Kirishima cuddling with Ashido, and Kaminari running his hands through Bakugou’s hair, who looks like he’s bearing with Kaminari’s nonsense, but hasn’t exploded at him once, so Kyoka suspects he’s enjoying it.

“Guys! False alarm!” says Sero, an all of them look up. Ashido stops and goes back to stressing over her math homework, Kirishima doing to same. Kaminari gets his hands out of Bakugou’s hair so fast that

Bakugou snarls at him, but Kaminari simply ignores him and sits on the couch beside Bakugou, fiddling with his phone. Bakugou continues reading.

Kyoka stands open-mouthed, looking at the scene with wide eyes. She points to them, then at Sero, then at them, and finally asks: “What the hell just happened?!?”

“Funny story. We’re not actually dating,” says Sero, his smiling apologetically.

“What?!?”

“So, the thing is that Bakugou figured out that the guys from the other UA were trolling us. Did you ever noticed that they crossed their fingers every time they flirted with each other?”

Kyoka shakes her head dumbly.

“That really was an asshole move!” says Kaminari from where he’s sitting on the couch. “We got back at them really well though!”

“Remember Feedback’s face when you kissed Bakugou?” says Ashido, getting up from the desk and walking over to the couch. She pats the spots beside her, Sero and Kyoka take that as their cues and go sit down too. “It was priceless!”

“Or when Sero kissed Ashido! Man, Shibari’s face was *so red!”* laughs Kaminari, and makes a spot for Kirishima who decided to sit on the armrest of the couch.

The five of them laugh… well four, and Bakugou just smirks.

Kyoka doesn’t laugh though.

“Uh, Kirishima, Bakugou, can you guys do me a favor?” asks Kyoka, stabbing one of her earphone jacks into the cotton of the couch. She listens for a second at their heartbeats, their breathing, everything. “Could you guys hold hands for a second?”

Bakugou looks like he wants to refuse and swear up a storm, but Kirishima smiles placatingly. Bakugou deflates and spits out a “tch!”, but still compiles.

Kyoka listens.

She then asks for Kaminari and Ashido to hold hands. Then Sero and

Ashido. Bakugou and Sero. Sero and Kaminari. She goes through every combination. Then asks them to hold one of *her* hands.

“What the fuck was this for?!?” spits out Bakugou after Kyoka holds his hand for a few seconds.

“You know how one of the ways to tell if someone’s in love is by measuring their heartbeat and breathing patterns and pupil dilation and things like that?” explains Kyoka, subtly seating herself on the edge of the sofa so she can escape if need be.

“Yeah? Weren’t you taking a class on that?” asks Kaminari, looking on incomprehensibly.

Bakugou looks like he’s starting to guess where this is going, so Kyoka just blurts out: “I could be wrong, but practically all of the combinations I just did register as in love.”

There’s a second of stillness as the bomb Kyoka just dropped sinks in.

“So, I’ll be going. Uh, bye guys!”

After she closes the door, Kyoka hears the entire room explode, both literally and metaphorically, voices screeching out of it.

...She forgot to ask Kaminari out. Dammit.

Judging from the ruckus, it would be much, *much,* better to just wait until the whole UA War is over. Yeah, that’s a good plan. (She’s not stalling. Who’s stalling? Not her!)

The door clicked shut behind Nedzu, chatter ceasing abruptly in the room.

“Excuse my tardiness,” he said cheerfully, walking over to his desk and sitting down, his counterpart shoving a sheet of paper he’d been reading towards him. “There were a few *interesting* developments, and I wanted to look at them a little closer.”

Power Loader looked with apprehension at his boss. That tone of voice never meant good times for any of the teachers. Sure, when it happened, the *teachers* ended up learning three times more than they

normally would, and the students learned even more, but after they always had to deal with the mountain of bullshit left over.

“So! How are preparations for the Civil War going?” said Nezu, while Nedzu read the paper. “Cementoss?”

“The building reinforcement is going well,” Cementoss said, pulling up a projection of the ground that would be used for the battle. Zones ready for use were highlighted in green, the ones that needed more work (a good third), were highlighted a bright red. “The sewer adaptation is a bit more slow-going, since the application of the products takes time. After I’m done, though, they’ll look and smell exactly like real sewers.”

Power Loader nodded, having dug some of the details in the tunnels as well.

“Midnight, how are the tests with the Media-bots going?” ask both of the Principals in eerie unison.

“They don’t quite get nuances in speech, or non-verbal communication with very marked mutant Quirks, but aside from that they understand the gist of human interaction and reactions to news, so they should be good for use. Though, did you have to make them so annoying?” she says, looking at Maijima, Power Loader’s counterpart.

“Look, not everybody can have as much talent as you have in making the press love you. Those robots act just like they would with the rest of us.”

She blinks and then smirks, satisfied with his answer.

“What about the new types of Securi-bots?” chorus both Principals, and Power Loader’s starting to wish they would just stop doing that. It’s creepy.

“The Police-bots certainly work as intended!” enthused Toshinori, as All Might pulled out a tiny notebook he’d recently started to carry along, unaware that the most likely source of the habit had been Kingpin.

“Their patrol routes are realistic, and their response times are very good for robots. They do an alright job of cataloguing crime scenes and collecting evidence. Their algorithm sometimes marks odd things as “evidence” and normal messes as “crime scenes”,” reads off All Might, while Toshinori nods along.

Toshinori then suddenly remarks: “Though, why do they quack every time someone says “duck”, and arrest pink things whenever they hear “baby”?”

A few snorts break out around the room as both Power Loaders facepalm.

“We’ve been dealing with the two Pink Terrors for a week, give or take, while creating the designs and software for those robots. We just wanted a bit of de-stressing while on the job, did that, and then forgot to erase it after,” explains Majima, while sharing a commiserating look with Power Loader.

There are a few sympathetic looks among the heroes. Even the Nedzu pair nods in sympathy.

“That is the reason why you’re the only pro that won’t have a bot based off them,” Nedzu villain (He never had a hero name) says. Suddenly, Power Loader had a maniacal grin, the villain heroes had despair-filled expressions, and the Heroes looked confused.

“Both of you didn’t leave somethin’ like that in the Military-bots, did ya?” asked Snipe, pointing at the two Power Loaders with his pen.

Power Loader shook his head.

“Good, ‘cuz those are definitely a finished product. They’re a giant *menace* .”

“They would have to be,” says Majima. “We modeled their sharpshooting after yours.”

Both Present Mics and Midnight snort at the backhanded compliment, while Snipe looks like he can’t decide if he should be flattered or offended.

When the amusement has died down, Eraserhead asks: “Who’s turn is next for the SWS testing?”

“Mine,” says Vlad King, looking up from his notes. “If the weaknesses of last time are already patched, of course.”

“They are, though I’m wondering if this much testing is really necessary?” asks Cementoss.

The villain’s teachers plus Midnight all look outraged at the notion.

“Most of the villains already know how to safely set up demolition charges–” starts Eraserhead, ignoring Vlad King’s mutered grumble of “who’s fault is that?” “– If we want to keep the superweapon from being prematurely accessed, we need to make the Super Weapon Site as impenetrable as possible. If all of us, Pro Heroes, can’t get in there by force, the villains won’t be able to get in either.”

“The tests also have another underlying purpose,” admits Nezu, while his counterpart nods. “We have already witnessed how UA’s security measures are insufficient. The data we collect from the SWS could be used to create safer buildings in UA,” he explains. “Are we all in agreement?”

Nods come from the people present in the room.

”Wonderful! Now, should we start with the villain tactics, or the hero tactics?” Nedzu asks the group.

Vlad King groans and says: “Villains. Just get this over with.”

“Well for starters, They rigged their voting and made it seem diverse enough to avoid suspicion, but made sure Kingpin got enough votes. Drug Runner made a misdirection plan for mostly using sexual and romantic relationships as a smokescreen. The villains also seem to be planning to divide their team to avoid the issue of the supply shortage. They did well with that ‘accidental’ switch up of the Denkis.” Nedzu air quoted that last one. Vlad just grabbed his head and groaned with Eraserhead.

“I’m gonna need a drink after this, aren’t I?” asked Aizawa to his counterpart.

“However, the latest developments in the villain team seem to be a new focus on stealth,” began the other Nedzu. “I’ve watched through the cameras a few, very interesting, new applications of quirks. And, the research team has done a fantastic job of justifying where they got the materials for gear from. I’ll admit, disguising metal-gathering as community-service trash clean-up, and then shaping said metal using Smuggler’s softening quirk was a very inspired decision. “

“On the hero side, the Paragons have been doing a stellar job of creating team unity, and their team compositions are a work beauty. Their decisions of becoming co-Paragons was truly an excellent one, since apart, the plans they come up with are either too textbook, in Iida’s case, or too short-term, in Kendo’s case. They are picking up on the subtle cues of this not being a “normal” exercise, and picking up

the pace subconsciously. Whether it'll be enough remains to be seen."

"Mei has taking advantage of the time she has to plan to the fullest," Maijima decided to interject. "She's been creating everything at a frenzied pace, that I fear might have to be curbed very soon. Still, she has already finished all the costume upgrade prototypes for the heroes, and she has the rest of the week to fine-tune them."

"There is one big difference, though," adds Power Loader, knowing that his counterpart couldn't possibly know this. "She's been completely dedicated to her role as support, so none of the heroes have noticed her potential as a field agent."

There are raised eyebrows and looks of disbelief among the heroes' teachers.

Power Loader doesn't blame them. Hacker was such a talented student, and so focused on inventing, that he'd never considered her as having a talent for heroics. Not even the Sports Festival had challenged that belief, as she was too focused on advertising her creations. It wasn't until the Civil War that he realized that, with her quirk and determination, she could have very well become Snipe's protegé, along with Assault.

"Now here's something interesting," Nedzu said with a grin, a bad sign indeed. "Somehow, Midoriya was able to figure the villain's plan." He said, with one giving an odd look to All Might and the another to Toshinori.

"He's been blackmailed not to tell on them, however, he's still been planning ways to help the heroes as best as he can, effectively becoming something of a "shadow Paragon". The only person he's told is Bakugou." There were some grimances around the room. Bakugou was known to be … a loose cannon.

"Strangely enough, no property damage or serious injury was caused, just seven new relationships. We might need to continue watching the situation on both sides, however. Just to be sure… and maybe have Midnight teach a sex ed class." A dark aura accompanied her evil smirk. The teachers almost felt sorry for these students … *almost* . The kids still gave them too much paperwork after all.

"The highlight of the matter, however…" said both Nedzus, returning to their unholy unison, clasping their hands in front of their face, moving in complete synchronicity. "Seems to be that both Bakugou and Midoriya have found a loophole in the rules, and enacted it just a

few minutes ago."

Power Loader had hoped they had patched all of the loopholes they could. Apparently, it was nothing more than a vain wish.

"In the rules we had specified that the students could not get help or training from UA staff for the Civil War. We had changed those rules to "cannot get extraordinary help or training from staff during the preparation days" in an attempt to avert what happened in the last Civil War," said Nedzu, the one from the villain side.

"Yet, it seems we failed to take into account other factors," continued the Nedzu from the heroes' timeline, a slow smile growing on his face. "We failed to consider the heroes would ask *another student* for help."

"Which student did they ask?" asked All Might, with a hint of worry.

"... Nejire Hado. And she *might* have brought two friends of hers along."

Ignorance

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

I do apologize for the late update, but hey! Here it is!

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Izuku really, *really* wished he could say he had slept well that night, but if he did, he'd be a *huge* liar.

Instead, he woke up tangled in his sheets like a sushi and had somehow managed to get a bruise while sleeping. Still, he stretched and watched with a sleep-bleary mind as 1-A and 1-B got up from their futons.

Wait… he wasn't in his room. Why were his classmates he–

Oh, right.

The UA War's today!

Izuku quickly untangled himself from the sheets, and headed for the bathrooms before the line could get too long. He got a few sleepy 'good mornings!' on his way there, which he returned with cheerfulness.

"Time is of the essence! We cannot afford to be late today!" ranted Iida, trying to wake up the few slackers of the classes. Or the ones that had gotten knocked out by Midnight's Quirk.

It wasn't his proudest moment, but if Izuku was being honest, Midnight's Quirk was probably the only reason why he had gotten sleep at all. On one of the meetings, (Izuku couldn't remember which one. Was it the one on Monday? Or Wednesday? He didn't even remember. He doubted anyone in the team did) it had been decided that they couldn't afford tired people in the UA War, hence asking Midnight for a few cans worth of her sleeping gas.

(He still felt kind of icky about telling Midnight only part of the reason for wanting the gas, but he still tried to remind himself he was only taking advantage of a loophole. Nothing more.)

Izuku heard a thump from one of the corners, and watched with a tiny bit of laughter as Tokoyami got shoved out of the bed by Kendo's giant hands. He simply rolled over on the floor and muttered "a creature of the night has no purpose in being up so early".

Izuku didn't know what Tokoyami was talking about. 4 am wasn't early at all!

Kendo, with one had on her hip, simply put one of her enlarged hands beside Tokoyami's head and snapped. Multiple people clapped their hands over their ears, except Shoji, who simply changed his ear-tentacles into eye-tentacles.

Izuku had to physically stop himself from letting his mouth start muttering about the implications of Shoji having such an instinctual grasp of his Quirk that it modified a basic instinct, which a lot of people with Quirks that also change their physionomy so much still have. He had once seen how a guy with bat ears had clapped his hands over the sides of his head, and not the top of his head, where his ears actually were. What was different between the two? Was it because Shoji used his Quirk a lot more? But, no, the guy couldn't exactly turn his Quirk off, so maybe it was their age difference? Would that even–

"I'm up, I'm up just stop the creepy noise!"

There were some murmurs of agreement from the slackers, as they finally stood up and went to get ready.

'Creepy noise? But there wasn't any creepy– Oh, wait. I was muttering, wasn't I?'

Izuku clapped his hands over his mouth, his cheeks aflame with a blush. It seemed the entirety of the hero team was quietly laughing at him, which made his cheeks go even redder.

It was his turn in the bathroom, so he took the opportunity to get away from their amusement and ducked into a stall.

He set a timer for himself, and let his body go in auto-pilot while his mind went over everything one more time.

The new gear, team composition, general tactics, delay tactics, spying operations, what little information they had gotten on what the villains needed to do in order to get the superweapon…

He took a deep breath. The nervous buzzing in his chest abated slightly, and by the time he was out of the shower, he was ready to face this challenge head-on.

Changing was a quick affair. Their hero costumes were already set out from last night, and the new pieces of gear were placed in neat rows, some of them with written instructions on how to put them on and/or how to use them. (Iida's idea, of course)

When he was finished, Izuku practically ran out of the bathroom, and walked over to what had been dubbed as the "command table", consisting of Iida and Kendo (who weren't there yet, which was kind of surprising. Why were people so difficult to wake up?), Shiozaki Ibara, Yaoyorozu Momo and Honenuki Juzo.

Izuku got greetings from everybody on the table, and took the breakfast that was set on his spot, ready to be eaten.

"Good morning, Midoriya," greeted Shiozaki, taking a bite of her bread. "Did you sleep well?"

"Good morning, Shiozaki! And, I did! Kinda. I slept, at least, although my mind was running on abo-" he got shoved aside before he finished.

"Stop rambling this early nerd," grumbled Kacchan, a scowl folding up his forehead.

The heck? Kacchan usually wakes up much earlier than–oh wow he looks bad. Kacchan had bags under his eyes as he made coffee. Now that he looked, most of his group looked bad. Could they have been up all night? It wouldn't make sense for them to be so sleepy otherwise. What could they have been– moving away from that train of thought, Izuku gestured to Iida and Kendo, who finally came in and sat on their table.

"Good morning everyone!" greeted Iida, and smiled at their own 'good morning!'s

"Everybody knows the plan?" asked Honenuki, taking a sip of coffee, and immediately making a face. He didn't seem to be accustomed to the taste, but he still drank it all with a grimace.

“We finish getting ready in twenty, then head to the city to scout the base and possibly get acquainted with the Ground itself,” said Kendo, who was shuffling through papers, notes and cellphone pictures, checking and rechecking that everything was were it’s supposed to be. With a nod of finality, she finishes her checks and takes her chopsticks to finally begin with her breakfast.

“I have had confirmation that they will be here shortly,” announces Yaoyorozu, while looking at her cell phone, a message which Izuku can’t make out from here. Yaoyorozu doesn’t even have to say who they are. Everybody already knows.

Conversation stops after that. Not many people, in the command table or otherwise, are talking, mostly because the time they have to eat and get ready is far too short to waste it in idle chatter. Waking up at 4 am to get more or less one hour and twenty minutes of extra time would seem like a bad bargain for many, but Izuku had thought it a great idea when Yaoyorozu proposed it. Still, it would have been nice to relax with the team before heading out.

Breakfasts are finished in record time, and plates are collected in a flash. People flit from here to there with excited and nervous faces as they mentally tick their to-do’s. Izuku lets himself be absorbed by the atmosphere, passing Kaminari his choker with a grin, and helping Shiozaki adjust her gear.

Soon enough, everyone’s gathered and ready to go, waiting expectantly for the order to head out. It arrives shortly, in the form of Iida stepping forward, and announcing with ramrod straight posture and robotically flailing hands:

“Everybody! We have ten minutes to get to the Ground. Let us move quickly!”

“Wait, wait, wait. It’s that all you’re going to say?” asks Kaminari, looking extremely confused.

“What do you mean, Kaminari?”

“In the movies, there’s always this cool moment where the leaders make a speech, and it would be awesome to do that! And later we’re going to be busy getting everything ready, so I thought, why not have it here!” Kaminari finishes.

“Oooh, that’d be so cool!” enthuses Uraraka, while Kirishima nods beside her.

Monoma looks like he wants to scoff at the idea, but Kendo shoots him a look and steps up.

“Heroes of UA!” she begins drawing everyone’s attention to herself in an instant. “We were given an opportunity like no other to put our skills to test! No matter the outcome, we will have learned and grown from facing ourselves head-on, in a very literal manner.”

There are nods of approval throughout the crowd, and a few murmurs of ascent.

“That said,” she continues, a fire sparking in her eyes for everyone to see. “We will do our damnedest to win this! Let’s show everybody that we are better as heroes than villains, that in the end, justice will always win! PLUS–”

“–ULTRA!” the whole Hero Course, plus Hatsume and Shinsou chorus as one. The room breaks out in cheers, and even a few wolf-whistles. Izuku starts vibrating from excitement, and he shoots Iida and Uraraka excited smiles. Even Todoroki, looks his version of excited, which looks a lot like his neutral expression admittedly.

“That’s enough! We have seven minutes to get to the Ground!” announces Iida, and expertly shepherds everybody towards the door.

They get out into the darkness of the wee hours of the morning like an army marching towards their first battle, determined to win the war.

Same day. 01:03 am

Prism breathed in and out, slowly, purposeful, listening for every sound, keeping her eyes open.

In front of her, the darkness of the corridor stretched out without any kind of obstruction, each shadow suggesting different shapes and secrets.

Beside her, Assault stood, just as silently, with ear and eye tentacles shifting, serving as the perfect guard.

Behind her, Hacker fiddled with the lock of the door, manually

entering it's system to disable it.

With a quiet beep, the door opened.

The three villains stepped into the room as quiet as ghosts, treading carefully among the masses of sleeping bodies. The sounds of light breathing rose from the futons, their counterparts oblivious to the three enemy intruders in the room

Hacker immediately made her way over to a computer, one of of the three that were in the room, and with a manic grin she began to tear apart the computer's security, hunting for any kind of info.

Prism couldn't stop to watch, however. She stepped over a sleeping Rin (who slept with like, five comforters. Who needs that many– oh, right. Cold-blooded), and passed carefully beside a sprawled Kaminari (who was snoring like a chainsaw. Sheesh). She was now in a prime position, and she could get to work.

She unzipped Kendo's backpack and took a picture of the contents, just to make sure she'd know how to re-organize everything once she was done. Then, she started digging through it, hunting for plans, anything that could give them an upper hand.

Prism tried to focus on her task, ignoring any kind of noise coming from the UA War heroes. It took a lot of effort. If she'd been sent alone on this mission, she might have lost *so much* time of the precious hour they had watching for anyone waking up. But, with Assault here acting as a sentinel, Prism worked sure that he'd be able to hear and see anyone waking up, no problem.

The first interesting thing she found was a spray can with a *very familiar* scent.

Prism frantically gestured to Assault, who stretched one of his ear-tentacles to reach her, and a mouth-tentacle to reach Hacker.

"They had the same idea as us! Well, the "use Midnight's Quirk to our advantage" part, not the "let's spy on our enemies on a technicality" part," whispered Prism into Assault's tentacle, gesturing to the can she was holding. She could kind of see how the mouth-tentacle near Hacker relayed everything she said.

The ear-tentacle listening to Prism morphed into a mouth, which whispered back to her: "I was already wondering why Shinsou nor Midoriya were waking up."

“Good!” said the tentacle, this time in a falsetto, which meant this message came from Hacker. “That means we can just use *our* Midnight’s Sleeping Spray on whoever we want! Though please don’t use too much! If they wake up far too sleepy than they should have been they could get suspicious!”

Assault nodded and both tentacles retracted. A third reached out with their can (unpainted, contrasting with the deep blue of the hero’s can) and started softly spraying Bakugou, and moved to apply a dose to Tokoyami, and anyone else that would be liable to wake up.

It was in times like this that Prism was grateful their enemies were themselves. They didn’t have to guess who was a light-sleeper, because they had just asked the villains who could be easily woken up.

Prism broke herself out of her musing when she found something interesting. A slew of papers, all in a folder with the UA logo on it and “UA War” scribbled below.

Bingo.

She quietly took out her phone and snapped picture after picture of the papers. She didn’t have time to check what they said, but she was *sure* those would be a goldmine. As soon as she was done, she sent the pictures to the waiting Kingpin and his trusty team of strategists for their enjoyment.

Prism smiled to herself and turned around, beginning to rummage through Iida’s things. In this position, with the little moonlight filtering through the window, she could see Hacker move to crack what looked to be her third computer. By the look on her face, Prism guessed she had also found a treasure worth of info… or she was just getting excited for the opportunity to try and hack her counterpart’s computer next.

Not much caught her attention in Iida’s things, except for a few notebooks on rules the heroes had to follow (Prism smiled at those. Half of them would become obsolete as soon as the game was on.) and an absurd amount of glasses. She really wanted to keep searching for info in IIda’s things, she mused while she was sending what she found back to base. But, there was one person they *had* to spy on if they wanted to win this.

Prism rose from her crouched position, and made her way to Midoriya’s backpack.

The notebook was exactly where Kingpin said it would be, and just like he predicted, the notebook wasn't written in code like Kingpin's was. Prism recognized that as a *huge* security-risk, but that could be fixed after the UA War. She meticulously started taking pictures of the pages, making sure to follow the correct order.

Prism sent the pictures while Hacker cackled softly in the background, and Assault sprayed Bakugou yet again. Sheesh, was Bakugou really that much of a light sleeper? It had to be the third time they had to–

Her phone started buzzing. And not the short buzzing of a text message that would be the HQ's way of contacting them. No, it was the buzzing of an incoming call on silent, the signal for "return to base *now"*.

Prism stood up abruptly, and without meaning to kicked Midoriya. He still didn't wake (she had to thank Assault for that *so much*) and practically sprinted her way to the door. Hacker lasted a few more seconds, extracting what little she could from her counterpart's computer, before standing up and getting out the door.

The three of them ran back to base.

There wasn't any time to lose.

Forgery had never been very inclined to use crude language. There were always more efficient ways of expressing one's discomfort at a situation.

Yet, she had never been, in all her life, so tempted to let out a single "fuck". It certainly fit the situation.

A punch on the table snapped her out of her reverie and Forgery turned her head to see Powerhouse let a veritable stream of profanity from his mouth.

Forgery had been skeptical at first to let him into the Strategy Committee, but she had to recognize Powerhouse wasn't dumb by any stretch of the imagination. She was so glad she had made that decision. He was the one that had spotted this catastrophe first, after

all.

People trickled into the room in a hurried pace, shaken from having been interrupted on their tasks. A few of them had even been woken up from their turn to sleep. It was going to mess up the setting-up schedule so much, but the situation warranted it.

Forgery occupied the wait by frantically coming up with plans and possible courses of actions, eliminating possibilities and options by the handful, but any plan was going to be welcome after this.

At last, the three members of the Operation Midnight arrived. None of them probably knew the weight of the information they had uncovered yet, but if Hacker's face was any indication, they needed to be made aware of it before they decided to pry the information out of the S-Committee's hands.

"Okay, fuck. Whoever's not here yet needs to be filled in by you guys, ok?" started Kingpin, turning around to look at the small crowd. "I should have expected this, but there's nothing we can do about that now," he said almost to himself, and pulled up the digital version of the rulebook on the biggest screen in the room.

"All of you know my propensity for loopholes, right?" begins Kingpin, beginning to underline one of the rules in specific.

'Propensity for loopholes' is the biggest understatement Forgery has heard in quite a long while. It was that same 'propensity for loopholes' that had lead to Operation Midnight in the first place. It was just like Kingpin to realize that "no spying on the enemy team during the preparation days" didn't include "no spying on the enemy team *after* the preparation days, even if it was one in the morning. "

Kingpin turns around, and points to one specific rule. "Members from the Hero Course can participate in the UA War without a teacher's permission. *Hero Course* . It never specified they had to be First Years."

Crusade slaps the table. "I never thought they would use our own tactics against us! Weren't they supposed to be heroes?"

'Since when are loopholes a villainous tactic?' she thought. "What year are we dealing with?" Forgery asked.

"Third years, three of them. One of them is named Mirio," Kingpin read out.

“Must be the Big Three. Mirio Togata is the toughest of the bunch, with an intangibility quirk. His one weakness is timing, as he can’t hit, see, hear, or even breathe when intangible. The second is Nejire Hado, who can use energy based shockwaves. She gets exhausted if overused, like Icy Hot. Lastly we have Tamaki Amajiki, who can gain properties of anything he eats, and select what to give what part. He needs the item being copied in question in his system, so he carries a bunch of things around to eat, including crystals,” everyone was quiet as they stared at Powerhouse.

“Why … do you know so much about them?” asked Prism

“They were similar enough to my group. I figure I might as well learn what I can for the future,” was his reply.

“Similar like in love?” asked Hacker with a smirk.

“... I would kill you, but I need your weapons.”

“Are you serious right now?!?” shouted Fractal, a drastic change from her normal quiet and composed personality. “We got the news that we’re going to be against *Third Years* , who are just *months* away from being Pros! We don’t have time to argue!”

“Fractal’s right,” Kingpin spoke up with a cough. “We’re running out of time. The Big 3, as Powerhouse put it, are too big an obstacle to ignore. The plans have to change if we want to win this.”

“Wait, you’re not giving up?” asked Rin, wide-eyed at his leader. Not even Singularity could help letting out a snort of disbelief at the ridiculous notion.

Kingpin smiled and shook his head. “And let all the effort, the excitement, everything we’ve done these past few days go to waste?” his eyes sparked with resolved, his fists clenched in determination. Forgery might have been a little biased, but in times like this, Kingpin seemed to shine on his own.

“Never.”

The villains nodded towards their leader, and almost like one, rose from their seats.

“What can we do?” asked Larceny.

Kingpin’s smile widened.

The UA War might not begin officially for a few hours, but Forgery knew that, for the villains, *this* was were it all began.

Slow-starter

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

“First sweep of the base, complete!” called out Iida as he enters the Hero Central Command, earning a few nods and looks, before everyone else resumed their activities.

Iida smiled at their diligence, before shaking his head and walking towards his destination. There was too much to do to be distracted in this moment; could not afford to set a bad example.

Finding Kendo was easy; she stood talking with Kodai, seemingly getting an explanation as to the function of a few consoles. It was necessary knowledge, since Kendo would be taking the first turn in HQ command, so Iida stood politely silent beside the two until they finished.

Kodai turns back to reading the manual, while Kendo turns to face Iida and says: “So, how did it go?”

“The first sweep was a success!” begins Iida, doing a cutting motion with his right hand. “The position of the base is strategically in the middle of the city, with multiple exit routes that can be sealed with a single command. There are multiple chokepoints leading up to the labs, armory and here, which is very prudent considering an invasion. All in all a very functional base!”

“That’s good to hear. Anything else we need to be aware of?”

Iida nods curtly. “Sato has been complaining of the quality of the kitchens and the elevator is far too small for Shishida’s beast form and multiple of Hatsume’s inventions.”

“Don’t tell me you had to haul up the gadgets up the stairs,” asks Kendo, sounding like she’s envisioning the explosion marks on the stairs.

“Not at all! Uraraka simply floated all of them up to the floor, and a

few volunteered to help pull them in! Amajiki-senpai was of much help in there!"

"Well, that means set-up is complete. Let's call everybody up!" exclaims Kendo and turns towards Komori, who hastily swipes a few mushrooms off the keyboards and sits straighter. She nods once, and with nervous voice broadcasts the meeting through the comms.

Groups trickle in, indulging in idle chatter and commenting on different aspects of the exercise. The two last people to get in are Ashido, citing a discharged comm, and Bondo, who remains silent under the stares of everybody in the room.

"Bondo, you were also the last to get in the cars this morning. Please, do not make it a habit to arrive late!" Iida chastises and sits down after Bondo nods, almost missing the frowns from a few of Class 1-B. Particularly Monoma. He's already a headache waiting to happen.

"Attention everybody!" calls Kendo, taking the lead. "As of now we're going to set up teams! You can see the final teams on the screen." On cue, the names write themselves divided into eight different groups.

"As of now, teams Iida, Todoroki and Kuroiro will be on patrol. Be on the lookout for any villains!

Team Bakugo, as our main assault team, you'll be on standby for now. Get ready to be deployed at any second.

Team Honenuki, all of you are tasked with testing out the press features. As soon as you're done, join the other teams on patrol.

Team Shiozaki, you'll be our first contact with the Police-bots, find out anything you can from them.

Team Shoji, you'll be our info team. We've already gotten some tip-offs to suspicious activities. Team Shiozaki will give you details as they find more things, but for now investigate what you have.

My team and I will get the first turn manning the base. Any concerns?" Kendo finished, looking with a keen eye at the room.

Immediately, a hand went up.

"Who are *they*. And what are *they* doing here?" asked Mineta, which at first glance would be a question directed at the Big Three. Yet, anyone paying attention could guess the "they" meant Hado-senpai's breasts.

Iida was still in awe. Here they were, the Big 3! The most educated and best students in the school. How Bakugou and Midoriya got them to join is a mystery, but here they are!

“Nice to meet you, I’m Nejire Hado, but you can call me Neji! Wow, you guys looks so cool. Are those horns?” The girl asks question after question before she started to pull on Ashido’s horns … and still talked. He turned to the other two … and one of them was cowering behind the other…

“Um, is he ok?” Sero asks Midoriya.

“Yeah, he’s just socially awkward.”

“... And that’s coming from you?” Kaminari asks with a sweatdrop.

“Mineta-kun! No inappropriate behavior!” chastised Iida, and began to answer the question, until–

“Oooh, can I answer the question from earlier? Please?” began Nejire-senpai, and she assumed she could judging by their silence. “We’re Third Year students that got invited into this exercise! I’m Hado Nejire, that’s Togata Mirio and that over there is Amajiki Tamaki! Now, it wouldn’t be that fair to the other-you if we went ahead and won the war for you, would it? Instead, we decided we’re going to be your hidden aces! Ooh, we could be Team Ace! That sounds so cool, doesn’t it?” she enthused, jumping in place among the confused and amused stares of the rest of the students.

“That does sound cool!” Togata-senpai said stepping forward from where he’d been standing at Amakiji-senpai’s side. “Whenever the situation gets out of control, call us and Team Ace will be there to help!” he declared with a cheerful presenter’s voice, which drew smiles and cheers from the students. Iida could even divine a soft smile on Amajiki-senpai’s lips, before their eyes met and he turned to… stare at the wall?

“Anyways, there’s no time to lose!” called out Kendo.

Iida picked up from where she left off and announced: “Please, exit the room in an orderly fashion! And keep your comms charged! You’ll be calling in to base with updates every half hour!”

With mutters of agreement, the Central Command emptied out, and Iida saluted once to Kendo, before heading out himself.

Things were finally starting.

Tetsutetsu's eyebrow twitched twice as fast as his footsteps. He couldn't exactly help it, because the tiny purple kid had been talking only about senpai's breasts for the last hour, non-stop.

He could see Ojiro's tail swishing in agitation, getting closer and closer to smacking Mineta's head with each swing.

Their other two teammates, Bondo and Todoroki, didn't show any signs of discomfort, but those two were like freaking stone walls on the best of days. Bondo had the excuse of not really having a face, but Todoroki was as unreadable as the walls of ice he created.

Without anything else to do, Tetsutetsu sped up his pace to match Ojiro's and asked: "Is he always like this?"

"Mineta? He'd been getting better these last few days but that didn't last long," he sighed, looking at the kid in question, who was now trying to goad Bondo into giving scores of the tits they saw as they walked.

Did that bot just shake its head? And is it him, or there's one over there filming? Probably not.

"I was talking about Todoroki," Tetsutetsu corrects.

Ojiro blinks and shoots a look at their team leader, impassively scanning the street. "Oh, yeah. He's kinda like that. Most of the time at least. The only times I've ever seen him show emotion was with Midoriya, Iida or Uraraka."

"Darnit! Now I can't ask!"

"Ask what?"

"If we could split up. If Mineta went with the two stone-faces, then we could patrol for real and not have to listen to him! Plus, we could cover so much ground! But now I can't tell if the question would be well received," Tetsutetsu finished.

"We can't split up. Paragon's orders."

Both Tetsutetsu and Ojiro jumped at Todoroki's sudden comment, and found him looking back at them from the corner of his eye.

“They don’t want to risk us get ambushed alone. The villains would likely resort to tactics like that to try and eliminate us one by one. And that’s without taking into account the ease of slipping in a spy in small groups,” Todoroki said, and turned forward again to round a corner, giving a grateful nod to Bondo as he approached with Mineta dangling from his grasp.

“Dude, didn’t we make the passwords so a spy doesn’t slip in?”

“It would be rather foolish to rely only on those,” stated Todoroki, and then a thoughtful frown overcame his face. “Am I really that hard to read?”

If this had been an anime, Tetsutetsu would have definitely been sweatdropping.

“It’s not that bad,” begins Ojiro.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

There’s a second where the five of them look at each other. Bondo wordlessly drops Mineta back onto his feet. As a group they break into a run, heading towards the sound of a security alarm.

“HQ, we’re heading towards a supposed incident,” states Todoroki into his comm, voice even and clear.

“Understood!” responds Kodai through all of their comms. “Your position has been recorded!”

They round one last corner, and the problem is suddenly very obvious. A group of bots, dressed like the stereotypical robber you see in cartoons with the black mask and everything, are stealing things from a convenience store, shoveling them roughly into a van.

None of the heroes hesitate.

Bondo immediately goes to glue the wheels of the van to the floor, while Todoroki speeds up ahead. Tetsutetsu jumps on the nearest criminal and socks him in the jaw, smiling at the satisfying way his fist connects with the metal face.

“No hostages!” shouts Todoroki as he ices the feet of a robber to the ground. Mineta “handcuffs” the bot together by sticking one of his balls in between the robots arms.

Tetsutetsu whirls around to try and catch the other two robots, but finds one of them stuck in a mound of glue, and the other unmoving in the ground with a dent on its chest.

"...Is that it?" asks Tetsutetsu.

"Looks like it," responds Ojiro, gently lifting the robber-bot and setting it up against a wall along with the other four.

"I've already notified HQ," says Todoroki while walking towards them. "They'll send the police to pick them up."

"Ok, is it me, or are the villains just really really quiet? It's kinda creepy" asks Mineta, which earns him a few nods from the group.

Police sirens begin to grow louder in the distance, which Tetsutetsu is kinda glad for.

"The more reason to get this over with," states Todoroki, facing the upcoming cars.

Tetsutetsu does too, but he can't help but grit his teeth. Who knows what the villains are doing? And the more they wait, the worse it'll be.

Tetsutetsu punches his hand and grins, ignoring the odd look Ojiro shoots at him. He'll hunt them down and knock em' out before they can do what their planning, Tetsutetsu vows.

What the hell are they even doing anyways?

She smoothed out her skirt, making sure it had no wrinkles at all.

The building of the newspaper company shone in the morning light, as bots filed in, their routines dictating their time for work, creating articles with nonsensical headings like "Random civilian throws paper out the window".

That was to be expected, she mused, they hadn't been running enough time for actual interesting topics to arise in the fake city.

She let herself in the lobby and, after making sure her hair covered part of her face, she walked to the front desk.

"Good morning, sir," she greeted at the receptionist. " Do you know where Nyūryoku Randamu-san's office is located?"

While the receptionist mechanically clacked in the name, she spared a few moments to taste the pride at imitating a rich-girl persona so perfectly. Forgery was a great template for it, and she'd have to thank her later.

"He's in the Hero News department, correct? Then go to elevator four, floor thirteen," the receptionist says.

She thanks him politely, and moves to the entrance, facing the Securibots with a smile on her face. She has nothing to fear from them. After all, Hacker's skill is undeniable. Crafting a few paper trails and fake websites was nothing to her.

The checks end with no fanfare, and the elevator arrives with a ding!

Once the doors close, she activates the comm on her ear, disguised as an elaborate earring, and takes out her cellphone, pretending to make a call.

"I'm in," she says with a smile.

"Good," responds the boss, just as giddy as her. "Remember what your main mission is. If you can pull off the secondary one, then go for it, but the primary mission is most important. And Extortion? Good luck."

"Same to you," she replies, slipping back into her persona, as the doors open to reveal rows upon rows of bots doing their jobs as pretend journalists. Extortion smiles and joins in, all of them unaware of the infiltrator among their midst.

Tangled Threads

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

The coffee shop is bustling with civil-bots going about their day, "purchasing" food and beverages that are only empty cups and little boxes of batteries.

'Not that they need them,' muses Fractal, taking a bite of a blueberry muffin while she waits.

She knew, like every other villain in the group, exactly how each and every bot in the fake city was made of and how it functioned. Nowhere in their design did they need external batteries to support themselves. She had helped with the capture and dismantling of one, after all.

The memory of the dismantling sits uncomfortably in her mind. She knew, rationally, that they were doing nothing more than taking a machine apart under the gleeful watch of Hacker. Yet…

Fractal's hand tightens on her glass of water, though she doesn't notice much at all.

Yet, the knowledge of what the robot was supposed to represent twisted the events in her mind into a *dissection* of a human being.

She sighs, taking the last few bites out of her muffin, and setting the wrapper aside, folding her arms in front of her.

In truth, that is not what worries her. It had been how easy Hacker turned the dissection into a game, awarding points and candy from her own cache for each part removed correctly, a bit like a to-scale game of Operation.

And it had been *fun.*

A beep in her ear broke Fractal out of her musings, discreetly accepting the incoming call from her comm by pretending she's

talking on her phone.

“Con Man-san?” she asked, idly scanning the street before her. The buildings on this part of town were not the nicest, just shy of the true slums of the city. Finding a decent shop to conduct a meeting had been quite a pain.

“Sorry, our spymaster was called out to the field a half-hour ago,” answered the calm voice of Magdalene, the click-clack of typing coming through the line as well. “I’ll be filling in for him until then.”

Fractal subtly winced. She knew Magdalene well enough to know that being the head of a spy ring was going to take a toll on her. Magdalene hates lying, and coordinating multiple liars didn't¡t sound like something she would enjoy. Nevertheless, Fractal breathed in and continued: “My target hasn’t arrived yet. Any info you could give me?”

“Yes,” came the voice of Magdalene, clicking thrice before continuing: “The target is currently four blocks away from you. It took so long because its “reputation” routine kicked in when a press conference was announced a while ago, despite the fact its “hero approval meter” is perpetually stuck at zero.”

Fractal sighed, and idly enlarged the wrapper in her hands, just to have something to do.

“How long until a hero patrol passes through here?”

“Give or take, an hour,” Magdalene answers, and then falls silent.

Fractal doesn’t wish to be left alone with her thoughts, so instead she asks: “How have you been doing?”

The typing on the other line stills. “I… I don’t know,” Magdalene answers, and Fractal can picture her coiling and uncoiling a vine of hair as a nervous tick. “I thought I would hate to be the villain, but… it’s not too different from being a hero.”

Fractal’s eyebrows lift swiftly. “Do your teammates’ behaviors not jar you?” responds Fractal, remembering how The Sparkle’s incoherent tirades about shining had gone from amusing to eerie when Hold Up had remarked “just switch shining with murder.”

“They do! They do, don’t get me wrong. It is simply the fact that the things we do are the same.” Typing picked up again, this time slower

than before. “We still have patrols, still hold down base, still make plans and man comms…”

Fractal gets it. She suddenly does, and shrinks her glass of water by complete accident, but only the glass, so water goes flowing everywhere. She hisses, the cold splash of water on her skin waking her up from her musings, and takes one of the napkins on the table, enlarges it, and uses it to sop up the water.

“Kodai– I mean, Fractal? Are you okay?” asks Magdalene, the typing being replaced by clicks. No doubt she’s trying to access the few cameras Hacker managed to get for the villains.

“Yeah, yeah. I just spilled some water,” mumbles back Fractal, holding her phone between her shoulder and ear so she can have her other hand free to clean up the mess. It wouldn’t do to make a bad first impression, after all.

As she’s balling up the soggy muffin wrapper, Fractal sighs and says: “We didn’t think villains could be people.”

“Pardon?” echoes Magdalene’s voice from the line, sounding the most confused Fractal has ever heard her.

“Every time we think of villains, we get those images from the news of villains fighting and robbing stores, or the ones from the movies where they’re strolling about their evil layer and building doomsday machines but–” Fractal throws the soggy napkin and wrapper towards an empty trash can, and it enters the can flawlessly. “– we forget they still breathe, still talk, still have family and favorite foods and still get songs stuck in their heads.”

Fractal doesn’t know where this is coming from, but now that she has started she can’t seem to stop. “We’ve– we’ve *demonized* them so much in our heads that they seem so alien! And I just realized we think of civilians a bit different too! Civilians, heroes and villains. The three species of humans.” Fractal laughs nervously, a tad giddy from her own revelation.

“I… hadn’t thought of that,” mumbles back Magdalene, seemingly lost in her own thoughts. Then something beeps on her side, and a rustle of vines comes through, meaning she probably just shook her head to clear her thoughts. “Nevermind, your target will be shortly entering the store. Remember, be blunter that you would otherwise, the robots still aren’t 100% accurate when it comes to non-verbal communication.”

“Understood,” answers Fractal, nodding sharply, before adopting a mask of calm. The door of the café opens, the bell tingling over the chatter around her.

The robot that walks in is slightly taller than the rest, wearing informal clothes (a pair of black jeans and a green t-shirt) its black hair cropped short and neat. However, all of the clothes seem to be high-quality, unlike the robots around it. The dead giveaway is the ring dangling from a chain around the bot’s neck. Fractal doesn’t need to look at it in order to know the ring has a whip insignia from one of the four gangs operating in the fake city.

“Good… afternoon,” Fractal greets after checking the time. Just past 1:30. She’ll have to move the meeting along quickly.

The gang-robot plops down on the seat, half-hanging out of it in a careless slouch. “I hope you’re not going to ask for a merger ‘cuz then we’re going to have problems, missy,” drones the robot, its voice box doing its best to imitate a tough-guy accent and failing miserably.

“Oh, of course not,” Fractal assures, folding her hands in front of her. “We’re only looking for a *little* cooperation, nothing more.”

“You gonna make us go face to face against heroes, aren’t you? What it’s in it for *us,”* drawls the robot, and Fractal fights the urge to laugh at the way it’s spouting generic bad guy phrases.

Still, she schools herself, thinks of the dozens of different plans and conditions she has memorized and lets her confidence in her knowledge shine through. The robot sits up straight, shoulders squaring.

‘That’s more like it,’ thinks Fractal, tracing a line with a leftover water droplet across the table. ‘Now that the respect subroutine has been triggered, things should flow much easier’

A small smile traces itself across her lips, an unbidden thought rising into the forefront of her mind.

‘Your move, *heroes.* ’

Rin idly stretches out his back while he listens at both Kaibara and Awase mess with Shiozaki, sighing at their antics. It’s not the first time they’ve tried to get a rise out of her, and it probably won’t be the last,

but the fact they're doing it so much is a proof of how on-edge their entire group is. Well, except for Aoyama. He's been checking himself out in every mirror they've come across so far.

"Kaibara, Awase!" the two of them turn back at the sound of Rin's voice, and leave Shiozaki alone, much to her relief.

"Yo, whadya want," drawls Kaibara with a bored smirk on his face, lightly punching Rin in the arm, thankfully without his Quirk.

"Just, I don't really trust this silence," Rin remarks, unconsciously letting scales grow on his left arm as he grips it. "Shouldn't have they done something by now?"

"They probably have," answers Awase, fixing his bandana while he talks. "They're probably trying to tread lightly. Fighting without resources must be *hard* ."

"Oh, undoubtedly," interjects Shiozaki. "Yet, I do not trust any of their ilk. Are our communications working?"

"Perfectly loud and clear!" suddenly shouts Hatsume into their comms, and every single member of their patrol team jumps.

"Jesus fuck, don't *do that* ," says Awase, rubbing his ears with a grimace, completely ignoring the stern look Shiozaki is shooting at him.

"Oh, sorry! I simply couldn't let slander of my babies stand!" enthuses Hatsume, "So if you don't mind I'll be going! There's a jetpack with my name on it waiting–"

"Wait! Can't you look into the reports and see if there's anything on them?" interrupts Kaibara, frowning at the air.

"Let me seeeee…. Yup, there's nothing. Just as expected!"

Rin grits his teeth in annoyance. He'd hoped the villains had done *something* to merit them some kind of news-worthy attention. But because they didn't, they'd still have their "underground villain" status and the civilian network wouldn't even recognize them.

"Mes amies?"

"Haven't they popped into the cameras either?"

"Nope! They must be sneaky sneaks to have gone unnoticed so long!

They're probably using the sewers or something."

"Ewww," grimaces Awase. "I had to look into those. Never again. Ever!"

"Mes amies!"

"But, wouldn't the smell be a dead giveaway for Shishida? Or– oh dear I forgot his name, the tentacle guy?"

"Shoji?"

"Yes, him! Though, on second thought, there are nowhere near enough people with olfactory Quirks to detect them all–"

"1-B!" screeches Aoyama and the four of them turn to look at him. He points towards the spotless window he was checking himself out with.

Rin is about to snap something sarcastic at him for making them watch his reflection, until he notices three pigeons perched on top of the windowsill of the office behind them. And, on top of the building, he spots a set of very suspicious skin-colored rocks.

"Hatsume? Where's Koda right now?" asks Rin, trying to look as casual and relaxed as possible.

"Three blocks away, give or take. Why?"

"We have found a villain," says Shiozaki, ignoring Aoyama's sparkle and comment of "I found the villain!"

"We're engaging in three–"

Rin gets closer to Shiozaki, discreetly letting one of her vines curl around his waist. The other three follow suit, though Shiozaki's careful not to put her vine in front of Aoyama's laser.

"Two–"

The three pigeons take flight, returning towards their temporary master.

"One–"

Rin covers his arms with scales, and the vine on his waist is joined by three others.

“Go!”

Shiozaki shoots her vines towards the top of the building, taking purchase on it and using them to hoist herself and everybody in her vines up. The Koda-villain orders all the pigeons on the roof to choose that moment to fly in every direction, startling the heroes. The villain uses that time to run toward the next building, jumping over the gap with startling ease.

Rin tries shooting some scales at him, which doesn’t work at all since he’s already behind the higher wall of the next building’s rooftop, and the five of them are left scrambling after him.

Awase and Kaibara decide to take an alternate route and use a convenient plank to cross over to the building on the right.

When he finally catches up, Rin takes notice of the villain’s fluttering grey cloak and rudimentary gas mask and goggles.

“My vines are too short!” Shiozaki yells, and Rin remembers she shortened them so she could run more freely just before they set out to patrol this morning.

“There are a few crates on the ground below!” screams Kaibara, pointing at them from the other building. Rin immediately gets what he’s trying to say, realisez he’s too far away for what Kaibara is suggesting and gets an idea that proves he’s been spending too much time with the two 1-B class clowns.

“Shiozaki, throw me!”

She wastes no time, gripping him with her vines and sending him flying over the building and alley below, landing in the building the villain’s in with a roll. Rin springs to his feet and launches a barrage of scales in his direction.

The villain yelps and stumbles, getting closer to the edge but not enough. The villain looks around, frozen in place likely panicking and it looks like he’s going to try and run towards them until Aoyama fires his laser, blinding him and making him flinch back.

“Wait!” he pleads, and yep, he’s definitely panicking.

“Hell no!” screams Awase and throws a rock at the villain’s face.

That’s what does it, and the villain stumbles and falls to the alley

below, right on top of the stack of crates, which break loudly.

“Whooo! Did you guys see that?!?” cheers Awase, fist-bumping with Kaibara and doing a funny little jig which has Rin snorting in laughter.

“Good,” declares Shiozaki, already calling the police’s number for pick-up. “That should be a successful–”

She frowns, tapping at her comm. She waits for a second, then taps again and frowns further.

“What’s wrong?” asks Rin, senses suddenly on high alert.

“I don’t know. The call cut off without warning, this doesn’t make any sense!”

Beep beep beep beep, beep beeeep.

The heroes jump, scrambling for their phones as they vibrate in unison.

“What do we do?” asks Kaibara, holding his phone away from his face as if it was going to explode. It kept buzzing the same rhythm over and over again.

Rin doesn’t know what the villains have in store, has no clue what he or his classmates would have come up with as revenge if they were the villains, but he has the feeling he doesn’t want to find out.

“Don’t answer!” suggests Awase with a shit-eating grin. “What are they gonna do if we don’t answer, wait and call again?”

“ *Ha! As if that would work* .”

Rin almost dropped his phone, startled by the voice coming from it. He hadn’t even answered the call! He glances down at his phone and his eyes widen.

On the screen stands out a single figure. An unknown villain in a full face mask of sharp angles and intricate glowing orange lines, the glass of the eyes tinted an angry red. A maw full of fangs stretches out in a perpetual wild grin on it.

“ *You let your guard down, didn’t you? All of you will* pay *for that.”*

Blasts echo faintly from far away. Three plumes of smoke begin to rise

in the distance. Incident reports flood in, making all of their phones ping burst into chaotic sound.

Then the devices fall silent.

“*It's our time to win!*”

Here Comes the Boom!

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Kendo has run out of things to do in the Base. It's something she hadn't expected and it's something she doesn't like.

This radio silence is something that doesn't strike her as Midoriya's style, and since Kingpin is just another version of Midoriya, she has assumed it wasn't Kingpin's style either.

The only reason she could think they would do this is if they had found a way to find parts of the password by *not* engaging in combat, but it wouldn't make much sense if the purpose of the exercise, pit the two UA's against each other, was taken into account. Maybe there are *some* parts that can–

Kendo furiously shakes her head and goes back to monitoring the comms. That wasn't her original job, but since there's nothing much to do in the base, she had relieved Kodai of her duty just to stop worrying about the possibilities.

She tabs over to Hatsume's laboratory to check on her– she's elbows deep in adjusting Bondo's armor and simultaneously answering Nejire's excited questions.

"Hatsume," calls Kendo while stretching her hands behind her back. On the screen, Hatsume stops working to look at the camera. "Weren't you supposed to be working on Honenuki's armor by now?"

"Yup! But Glue Giant didn't get the memo to come to his fitting 'cuz he broke his comm, so he came by a bit later!" she responds gleefully, waving her arms in the air, and Kendo winces at the state of her nails.

"Good, just try to hurry up," sighs Kendo. This type of setbacks were to be expected, but that doesn't mean she had to like it

“Sure!”

“And Nejire-senpai?”

“Yes?”

“Could you come up to Central Command? Patrol check-ins are going to start pouring in shortly, so I’d need the extra hands. Could you also call Kodai? She should be on your way up.”

“Sure!” she says, and practically skips out of the room.

Kendo sighs, getting up from her chair to stretch a bit further, when she notices someone at the door.

“What’s up?” Kendo asks, noticing how he keeps glancing away from her and tapping his foot on the ground with restless energy.

“Well ...you’re my friend. And as such one of the only ones I can trust to ask about this,” Kendo tensed up. Monoma was never really like this. He’s confident to the point of arrogance, but with enough intelligence to back it up… taken his enemy wasn’t from 1-A. So, just to make sure–

“...What is Dracula’s biggest weakness?” she asks.

He blinks, before understanding why she would ask a check question. “Twenty unmarked essays and the mummy’s class.”

She nods. “Ok, talk to me.”

He started playing with the cuffs of his jacket.. “...Remember the whole party drugging thing?”

She grimaced, she had done … some things she regretted. What kind of Class President joins in a prank instead of stopping it? At least both Midoriyas had taken it well. “Yeah, I remember.”

“Well …” He struggled to talk. “ … I woke up next to the invisible girl.”

Kendo blinks.

“Wait, woke up *how* ? Because if it is the *other* kind of waking up then I should probably ask Sensei to give us a talk about safe–”

“No! Pants were still on!” A sigh of relief escapes Kendo’s lips, but

Monoma's still playing with his cuffs, so why– "Just… not much else."

"How do you feel about that?" asks Kendo, patting a chair beside her and gesturing for Monoma to sit.

"I... I don't know?" Monoma takes the seat and runs a hand through his hair.

"You sure?" Kendo prompts further, because she knows Monoma. She knows that he has a tendency to overthink things always, so he should have at least a hypothesis.

Monoma opens his mouth. Seems to reconsider and crosses one leg over the other. But then he squares up, takes a deep breath and–

Thirteen different alarms blast on.

Kendo slaps her hands over her ears, ringing from the noise, and turns to look at the panel. Her eyes widen, her stomach drops from under her and icy panic crawls through her veins.

There's a second where she's back when Kamino happened, at the moment the news channels had broadcasted the panicking crowds and torn buildings, and she had been glued to the screen in horror, unable to do anything but stare.

That last thought shakes her out of her panic.

She *can* do something, this time. This time the responsibility falls on her, and she refuses to stand around doing *nothing.*

"Monoma! The comms!"

He snaps into action, slamming one of the headsets on his ears and starting to talk full speed, for once not caring that his conversation partner is from 1-A.

Kendo takes advantage of the moment to sift through as much information as she can, and each new report paints an uglier and uglier picture.

"I got her!" skips in Nejire-senpai. Her smile melts off her face and she stops in her place. She blinks. But then her shoulders square.

"What's going on?" Nejire-senpai says, and it's nothing like her usual questions, because here eyes are flitting from screen to screen at high speed and her tone expects an answer this time.

Kendo decides to do the rational thing and begins a broadcast to all hero comms.

“Three buildings just caught on fire via explosion.” Kodai hisses under her breath, but Kendo pays her no mind. ”There’s an old, abandoned warehouse for storing wooden crates near the piers.”

Mirio-senpai and Tamaki-senpai burst into the room to stand at Nejire’s side.

“The warehouse’s the least of our worries. The other building is in the industrial sector; a clothes factory which just *happens* to be beside a bottling plant that deals with mainly *alcohol.”*

“ *And the third?* ” asks her co-Paragon from the comm, tension boiling in his voice.

“The third is a skyscraper in the financial sector. The thing is, this one’s only burning from its left side and if it collapses in that direction, it will probably crush the casino beside it.”

Kendo takes a second to breathe in, get her nerves under control, but once she does, she already has a course of action in mind.

“We’ll man the comms”, announces Mirio, Nejire already taking Kodai’s headset, while Tamaki sits and begins watching the cameras and feeds. “And if you need advice we’ll be here. Do your best!” he says with a determined smile.

Kendo nods her thanks, the burden on her shoulders a tiny bit lighter.

She pulls up everyone’s positions on the map, calculating ETA’s with a few clicks. She looks at her options, and then comes up with a plan on the spot.

“We’re switching into configuration 5!” There’s a few whispered questions in the line, but almost all remember what their teammates are supposed to be for this case. Kendo only has Iida’s insistence to memorize the formations to thank for that.

“Team Shiozaki, keep the skyscraper from coming down! Team Monoma will help all of you with the evacuation of the casino.”

“Very well.”

“With pleasure!”

“Team Iida, go for the the burning factory, get there as fast as you can and evacuate. Team Honenuki will help all of you put out the fires.”

“Understood!”

“Alright.”

“Team Yaoyorozu, the warehouse is yours.”

“We will do our best.”

“Team Bakugou and Team Rin, you’ll provide support if villains pop up anywhere. Meanwhile, keep the crime-bots in line.”

“Fuck– fine.”

“Sure.”

“My team, come back to base. I am not taking any chances of this being a distraction and getting our base attacked. If things get too hairy, we will also join the fray. Any concerns?”

There’s silence over the line.

“Good. Now go!”

Hagakure grits her teeth, running after her team leader with all the strength she has.

“How long until we get there!” yells Kirishima, slightly muffled through his brand-new mouthguard.

“We should be there– now!” As Yaoyorozu says this, they round the corner to see the warehouse, flames already rising into the sky and smoke and sparks leaping in all directions. Hagakure activates the gas-mask feature on her uniform, watching as her teammates do the same. From the corner of her eye, she sees some villains leave the burning building, but the smoke doesn’t let her see who they are.

“Should we go after them?” Awase asks, already bouncing on the balls of his feet.

“No, saving anyone in there is our priority!” commands Yaoyorozu. “Still, Hagakure, report them to Central Command, please.”

“Alright! I’ll catch up with you guys once I’m done!” Hagakure enthuses, and watches as the other four members of her team go ahead and scatter.

“Central Command, this is Hagakure! Team Yaoyorozu just saw a few villains leave– uh, hello? Central Command? Is anybody there?” she tries and yet gets no response. She’s about to call for the others until a pink hand covers her mouth.

“Just stay quiet or I’ll use my acid.”

Oh shit.

Hagakure reaches up and grips the villain’s hand, her invisible glove sparking with electricity. Drug-runner yelps and lets go of her and Hagakure mentally sings praises to Hatsume for putting that into her costume.

Right after, Hagakure has to jump towards the fire to avoid the thin spray of acid coming from Drug-runner’s hands.

“You’re not going anywhere!” Drug-runner screams, and Hagakure stealthily unhooks one of her invisible flash-bangs from her belt. Just as she’s getting ready to throw it, Kirishima leaps from the side and tries to slash at Drug-runner’s head. He only gets a point-blank spray of acid in the chest for his troubles.

“I’m fine!” Kirishima yells, dodging another one of Drug-runner’s swipes to stand beside Hagakure. “My armor took the brunt of the hit!”

“Where are the rest of us?” Hagakure asks, finally throwing the flash-bang, only for it to be dissolved before it could be triggered.

“Fukidashi’s using the splash emoticon to deal with the flames and Yaoyorozu and Awase went in to get a civil-bot out.”

The smile Drug-runner gives them makes Hagakure regret she ever asked anything at all.

“Perfect!” the villain cheers, before dumping wide streams of acid to the sides of Kirishima and Hagakure. The acid catches on fire.

Behind Hagakure is the burning building, to the sides burning acid, and in front a maniacally grinning villain. They're trapped.

"Guuuuuuys! C'mon let's do this!" Drug-runner calls, and from behind her two other villains step into the light.

The one on her left is wearing a white shirt and black cargo pants, along with a black cloth mask and a ragged yellow scarf. The look is very familiar to Hagakure for some reason, but she can't remember where she saw it before.

The one on her right is bare-chested for the most part, the only armor being on the wrists, knees, elbows, or any other joint in his body. He's wearing black camo pants, and it takes a second for Hagakure to realize that's the villain Kirishima, because his hair is both black and hanging limply.

"Hell yeah!" smirks the villain on the left, which Hagakure recognizes as Feedback, the villain Kaminari. "All of you will learn to fear… Fuck," he curses and leans towards the other villain

"Tank, what's our name!?"

"What?"

"Our group name! What are we going with?"

"I don't know. You guys got anything?"

"Bangers?" suggests Drug-runner, and Hagakure takes that as an opportunity to look for escape routes.

"No, that sounds sexual!"

"Bombing Armada?" comes from a bit behind the two villains. Hagakure hadn't noticed there was somebody there.

"We have more than you, Powerhouse."

"I'm the main man, of course it's mostly me."

Feedback huffs in frustration. "We now go by… reapers."

"Weren't those a gang five years ago?" asks Kirishima, before he slaps a hand over his mouth.

The villains turn to look at the two of them in unison.

“Fuck it!” screams Powerhouse in the back, sudden orange gleams lighting up in the darkness in smooth lines. “All of you shut the fuck up and back off.”

There’s a clanking of metal as Powerhouse slowly comes into view, the lights in his suit intensifying.

“I heard noise! Is there something wrong?” says Fukidashi, rounding the corner. He stops to look at the scene with wide eyes.

“DIE!”

OH SH–

Shishida muffles the growl threatening to crawl out his mouth with a lot of difficulty.

He grits his teeth as a new bandage is applied, not because of the pain, but because of the sheer frustration with himself. The gunshot that got Asui in the back still echoes in his head, and he can’t help but grip the infirmary table until his knuckles are white.

“Shishida, could you please not tense up?” says the gentle voice of Midoriya, looking at him sheepishly.

Shishida sighs but complies and watches as Midoriya continues wrapping the bandage around the nasty cut on his leg with sure hands while muttering in a low voice.

“I didn’t know you were this good at first aid,” comments Shishida, just to make some kind of small talk. Midoriya starts, getting pulled out of his musings for a second, but then continues with the bandage.

“When I was a kid, I got hurt a lot and I didn’t want to worry my mother, so I learned how to do it myself,” he says, checking that the bandage is done right, and then moving up to another, smaller cut on Shishida’s arm.

“You were a reckless kid?”

“You could say that,” Midoriya answers, and Shishida frowns at him.

It’s not difficult to imagine Midoriya as a reckless kid, not with the

Quirk he has, but what he doesn't understand is the spike of fear he smelled on the green-haired kid as soon as he brought the topic up. Why would he be scared? But, then again, Midoriya always smells faintly scared, so he's half-convinced Midoriya has some kind of anxiety.

Midoriya's almost done with the second bandage, when their comms crackle with Kendo's voice.

"Report!"

Iida is the first one to answer, and Shishida fights to not tense up. This time Midoriya also tenses up. Neither of them want to hear their mistakes again.

"Team Iida here! We arrived to the factory on time, and began the evacuation process. However, we were attacked by a group of villains. We engaged them in order to be able to continue with the evacuation. We also requested back-up. However, we were unprepared by the villain team using guns, and Asu– Tsuyu was shot in the back. Then the villains left before backup could arrive."

"Sons of… cowards… couldn't even stay–" Shishida's words mix with his anger and come out as a stream of incomprehensible growling.

"Team Honenuki. We put out the fire of the factory as best we could. The villains had already left after killing Asui, so there's nothing much to report."

"Teams Rin and Bakugou," begins Rin, and there's a muffled stream of cursing in the background. "Both teams went after the same group of villains that killed Asui because of a miscommunication. It sent us on a wild goose chase. We have nothing to show."

"Team Shiozaki–" she begins, and Shishida has to wince at her voice. It sounds scraped raw, no doubt from the smoke, which is weird because she was supposed to have a gas mask. "We got to the skyscraper without much trouble, but when were in the process of securing the building, a part of the ceiling started caving over Bondo and Ojiro. Bondo managed to come out with just a few minor burns, but Ojiro got stuck and the rubble fell on him. He's dead."

Shishida curses under his breath, and Midoriya winces before he starts mumbling up a storm, probably coming up with more plans.

"Team Monoma." His voice drips with exhaustion, low and slurred at

parts. “We evacuated the casino, but midway we got attacked by villains. No casualties, but it was a very close thing.”

He doesn’t talk after that, and Shishida doesn’t blame him. He sounds like shit. He can give a more complete report after he’s rested.

…

There’s silence over the comms.

“Team Yaoyorozu?” asks Kendo.

…

Nothing.

“Does anybody know what’s going on with Team Yaoyorozu?”

“ *I do.”*

Shishida snaps to look at Midoriya. He looks just as surprised as he is, eyes wide in surprise and mouth slightly open.

“Kingpin?!?” squeaks Kaminari, and Shishida’s eyebrows rise at the impressive high note Kaminari just hit.

“ *Nice of you to recognize me,”* purrs Kingpin into the comms. His voice reminds Shishida of honey and caramel and ice cold enough to freeze blood in his veins.

Uraraka gasps into the line, and Bakugou lets out a very loud “What the *fuck* ” that makes Shishida almost throw his comm to the other side of the room to escape it’s loudness.

“What did you do to Team Yaoyorozu!” demands Kendo, and Shishida can imagine her leaning forward, eyes narrowing in defiance.

“ *Them?”* he pauses, almost as delighting himself with their growing dread. “ *They’re gone.”*

Shishida vaguely registers the thud of a bandage hitting the floor. He blinks, and looks to his right at Midoriya’s gobsmacked face.

Kendo curses, which draws Iida’s attention and he begins his usual tirade of “inappropriate language”.

Kingping laughs, sweet and innocent, and the hairs on Shishida’s arms

raise.

“What do you want,” states Todoroki in a voice hard as stone.

“Wrong question!” Kingpin trills. Shishida, gets up from his cot, Midoriya following soon after, as they make their way towards Central Command.

“ *It’s not a matter of what I want,–”*

The elevator pings, and both of them enter, squeezing themselves in between Kamakiri, Tsuburaba and Shoji.

“ *–but what all of you want.”*

“STOP SPEAKING IN FUCKING RIDDLES,” yells Bakugou into the comms, and Iida is there to reprimand him.

“ *Watch your mouth* Katsuki,” whips Kingpin’s voice, discarding the innocent and instead letting it drip with venom.

The five people in the elevator flinch.

“ *Oh, nevermind that!”* his voice returns to that velvety pitch, as if nothing had happened. “ *But all of you must be more careful if you want* her *back.”*

“Shit!” … did Uraraka really just say that?!?

The doors of the elevator open, and Shishida spills out along with the rest of them, soon activating his Quirk to get there faster.

Central Command is half-lit, in order to show the holograms better, despite Iida’s orders not to since it posed a “source of long-term ocular damage.”

Shishida turns to look at the hologram at the front of the room.

In the projection, Hatsume is chained to a chair, her goggles nowhere to be found and a half-groggy look on her face. Her hair is even more messy than usual, and there’s a few rips here and there in her clothing. A very noticeable bruise blooms purple on her arm.

“ *Ohohohoho,”* giggles the villain Hatsume, Hacker, on the right of the chair. She pats her other-self’s head with glee. She’s wearing a white lab coat with a frayed bottom, and underneath that a black tank top and a pair of artfully ripped jeans. ‘When the hell did she have time to

get a one-sided buzzcut?!?' thinks Shishida through his astonishment.

" *Look! Look at their faces! C'mon look!"* chirps Hacker, and her face shifts into a pout once she realizes her other-self is looking blankly to the side instead. " *I said look!"*

Hacker yanks Hatsume's hair, and she shrieks, looking around wildly and a little less dazed than before.

"Hatsume, stop!" Iida jumps in. "That is not hero-like behavior!"

Kingpin barks out a laugh, while Hacker's smile widens.

" *You seem to have forgotten, Iida-kun, what we are,"* the LED's in Kingpin's mask light up in a fiendish grin. " *So let us remind you. You have one hour to save her, in exchange for ten million yen."*

" *For every twenty minutes she isn't rescued we will, ah, 'make some noise',"* he states, and then all mirth flees from his tone. " *And heroes? The second you alert the authorities, she dies."*

He stays a second longer, savoring their silence, before bowing politely while Hacker waves her hand goodbye.

The screen goes black.

Consequences

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hatsume wants to bang her head against the wall out of frustration, but she doesn't because it would make it hurt even worse than it already is.

It's been a few minutes after her head finally cleared enough for her to hear her own thoughts, and they have been buzzing non-stop.

Her hands twitch in her lap, trying to reach for the pieces of junk she always has in her pockets to fiddle with and remembers they're not there anymore for the nth time. She gets up and starts pacing the length of her cell again, trying to make designs in her mind to pass the time, but that just makes her urge to do something even stronger.

She screams in frustration and plops onto the bed she's stuck with to whirl around erratically. When she's done, her hair is even more messed up than before, and her injuries make themselves known again. And she had only begun to ignore them!

She's about to scream again when she hears footsteps outside of her cage. She presses herself up against the glass window that makes one of her walls, looking to see who it is.

"Shoji?" asks Hatsume, as he pulls a chair behind him and seats himself onto it.

"My name is Assault, Hatsume," he says, pulling out two bentos, and dropping one of them into Hatsume's prison through a door she hadn't noticed before. "Eat."

Hatsume starts to eat on the floor, sitting cross legged. She tastes the first few bites slowly, very slowly, but she doesn't taste anything close to sedatives, and she's really hungry, so she tears through the whole box in a matter of seconds.

Hatsume sets her empty bento box to the side and asks: “Why are you here?”

Assault calmy keeps feeding himself through one of his tentacles and instead morphs another to answer: “Because we know you. If we were to leave you alone, you would go insane from boredom and probably tear up the room wanting to make something. If we just gave you materials to build, you’d probably make something to escape right under our noses. So instead I got assigned to watch you.”

“I don’t need a babysitter! I just need my babies!” shrieks Hatsume and flops down on the ground dramatically. It sets her back on fire, where she’d been dragged through the ground for a while when she’d been captured. She groans and sits back up, wincing.

“Whyyyyyyy,” Hatsume whines, dramatically enhancing her suffering. She’s gotten worse scrapes at the lab, but she’s going to use every resource she has or she’s going to go insane! If she has to annoy the villains to get what she wants then by the stars she’s going to do it! “Why did you do this to me?!?”

“Your capture was a very low-risk, high-profit operation, considering you went out alone to the field without telling anyone,” Assault points out, clicking his chopsticks once, before continuing with his meal.

“Hacker told me she did that all the time! I just wanted to see my babies in action. It’s not fair!” Hatsume crosses her arms like a child having a tantrum and looks away to the drab metal walls of her prison cell. It was probably some kind of storage room before the villains took away one of the walls and replaced it with glass. When they got the time to do that, Hatsume has no clue.

“Yes, but she had at least two guns always on her, had trained like mad for days on end, and used the sewers as her main method of travel,” points out Assault, finally finishing with his food and turning the mouth-tentacle he was using to eat back into a hand.

“Whaaaat? She never told me that!” Hatsume whips around to look at the villain, dressed in what looked like a minimalist version of a noir gangster’s suit. It was even black and white!

Assault’s tentacle smiles, his actual face smiling along with it.

“Why do you think she didn’t?”

Hatsume shuts her mouth with a click, sitting in a sort of butterfly

position, starting with furrowed brows at her feet. Why wouldn't she tell her?

She watches for a second at the shadows her feet make under the harsh industrial lighting. Then, it strikes her. They had already announced the war at that point. Hacker already knew she was going to be her enemy.

"SHE PLAYED ME!" screams Hatsume, jumping to her feet. "She led me on! I even shared my propulsor base with her and she BETRAYED ME!"

Hatsume lets out a wordless shout and stomps her foot on the ground. Her fists tighten and she sits on her bed, crossing her arms over her chest.

There's a sour taste on Hatsume's mouth now that she looks back at the hours they spent creating everything and anything that came to their minds. She never told her why she built the giant turret they made for the mecha so easily, did she?

Assault sighs.

"I guess they hadn't told you about it in the Support Course, did they?" comments Assault, hanging his black hat on the back of his chair. "Villains usually target support engineers, seeking to cripple heroes or get gear made for them. Just as many support engineers are killed or kidnapped by villains as heroes' families and friends. Why did you think I-Island was built?"

Hatsume blinks, eyes wide. Half-read articles flash through her mind, along with the list and quantities of defensive-type gear most support companies never sold to the public. Cold flows through her veins.

"They don't really advertise it much, not even in UA," says Assault, a grimace on his face. "The fewer people know, the more support engineers are willing to make gear for heroes. A 'worthy' sacrifice to uphold the hero system."

Words die in Hatsume's throat. She swallows hard.

The whole time she's been cooped up in there, she's been reminding herself these are her friends, her classmates, that she's been kidnapped by. They'd never do anything to hurt her.

But… the idea that she'd be forced to use her babies to destroy, to

hurt rather than to save…

She grits her teeth.

She hates it.

Hates it *so much* .

How come she never knew about this?

“Don’t blame yourself for it,” says Assault, knocking gently on the glass to distract her from her thoughts. He looks thoughtfully at her for a second, then seemingly makes up his mind.

“You’ll probably going to overthink everything I said,” mutters Assault to himself and starts ruffling through his bag for something. “So, maybe it would be best if I gave you a distraction.”

He pulls out Hatsume’s tablet from his bag and she squeals from joy.

“Don’t try anything, I’ll be watching you,” warns Assault, while re-opening the slot he’d slid her food through. Hatsume doesn’t wait and snatched the tablet almost directly from his hands and begins to frantically type the password in.

Hatsume’s mind bursts with ideas and plans, visualizing in her mind how she could get past the firewalls that are bound to be all over the place to keep her from contacting the heroes. She already has a preliminary design in her mind (which involves having to dismantle one of the lights over her head. She still doesn’t know how she’s going to do that without Assault noticing), when she freezes.

The background of the tablet’s blank. The casing doesn’t have the one scratch Hatsume made when she almost accidentally cut it in half. The sticker with her logo, the one stuck in the back, is two millimeters to the right from where it should be.

A hiss to her right makes her startle and drop the tablet, and she almost screams when she recognizes what’s being sprayed into her room through a row of hidden dispersants on the wall. Midnight’s sleeping gas.

Hatsume dives for the sheets on her bed shoves them as best she can onto her face and breathes in her last lungful of clean air.

“I told you before, Hatsume,” states Assault, sitting straight in his

chair with one leg slung over another. His face is unreadable from behind the glass, his hat plunging half of it in darkness. “We know you. You would never tolerate being helpless. We are not going to underestimate you.”

Hatsume’s eyes begin to water, as the room takes on a pink tinge. She remembers that moving burns through more oxygen quicker, and freezes, trying to make her breath last. In the back of her mind, she already knows this is a useless effort, but she’s not going to go down without a fight.

“Good night, Hatsume.”

Hatsume’s body rebels against her and takes a deep breath.

She isn’t awake long enough to feel her body crumple to the floor.

Assault waits a few moments, his tentacles listening intently for the rhythm of Hatsume’s heartbeat. When it’s slow enough, he presses a button on the screen of his own tablet, watching as the sleeping agent slowly begins to filter out.

Assault taps at his comm and speaks through one of his tentacles, grateful that the mic of his comm is not near the ear but on his belt. Twisting his tentacles upwards to talk had always been uncomfortable.

“Assault reporting. Hatsume is currently down for the count.”

“Good,” answers Con Man through the line and Assault winces at the tone of his voice.

“Con Man, you sound like you’re about to pass out,” states Assault, a frown etching itself in his face.

“...Don’t worry, Larceny already came by and threatened to use my own Quirk against me if I didn’t go to sleep in the next twenty minutes,” drawls Con Man and Assault breathes a sigh of relief.

“You’ve already done enough. Magdalene is doing fine on her own.”

Con Man snorts. “She’s doing more than fine. For someone that hates lying, she sure turned out to be one *hell* of a spymaster.”

Assault hums an agreement. When Kingpin had assigned her to work

under Con Man, he'd been hesitant. Her religious beliefs were such a big part of Magdalene, that Assault had difficulty imagining her doing anything "bad" even in the context of the exercise. How Kingpin had managed to see that hidden talent in her, Assault would probably never know.

"Room's clear, I'll go to you for the rest of the report."

Con Man grunts an affirmation and cuts the line.

Assault transforms all of the tentacles that could accidentally inhale something into hands and orders the glass wall to slide down. He picks up the tablet in one hand and cradles Hatsume in the remaining arms, careful to not jostle her injuries.

He makes his way towards the infirmary, where Smuggler gently takes her from Assault's arms and sets her down on one of the beds. He doesn't waste time, reaching for the new and improved healing salve and carefully applying it on her wounds.

"How long until your shift is over?" Assault asks, leaning on the door.

"Until two. Got the graveyard shift," Smuggler says, his lips quirking up in a small smile. Assault chuckles, aware of the oddly fitting shift, as Smuggler's perpetual skull-like grin, fits perfectly with the situation.

"Go report. I'm sure the boss would be all for some good news," comments Smuggler, leaning on his shepherd's cane as the medicine does its job.

Assault nods and heads out, satisfied that Hatsume's injuries were taken care of and would be healed in forty minutes. They'd already gotten what they wanted from her, there was no need for further cruelty.

At least, not yet.

He turns around and makes his way towards Central Command, passing beside a yawning Prism, nodding a tired greeting.

It's not particularly late yet, only a few minutes past eleven, but the villains have been working hard all day long. Aside from the few in charge of the essentials, most are already asleep.

'Or they should be,' thinks Assault as soon as he enters Central

Command and finds Hacker still working.

“Hacker, why are you still up?”

She turns around with a manic smile, the bags under her eyes contrasting starkly with the sparkles in her gaze.

“You just got her password! I can finally get aaaaaaaall of Hatsume-chan’s designs! There’s an interface visor for Rin that looks like a thing of beauty and a humidifier for Komori that I’m sure I could adapt to–”

Kingpin decides to poke her in the stomach, and Hacker shrieks, whirling around to throw a playful punch in his direction. Kingpin dodges it with a smile on his face.

A second later Forgery hits them both over the head with half a pool noodle, her skin still sparkling pink from where she’d created it. “As cute as both of you are, please focus. We’re all tired and we need to finish this before we head to bed.”

“As if that would do anything,” mutters Con Man, half-splayed over the desk, looking over Extortion’s reports. His purple hair looks like even more of a mess, sticking out in all directions instead of just upward. “We’re all too keyed up to sleep. Might as well use the time for something.”

“That sounds like sleep-deprived logic to me,” comments Assault, instead placing the faux Hatsume’s tablet on the table, where Forgery picks it up.

She pushes a hidden button on the tablet, prompting a second lock screen to appear, a neat and stylish “Hatsume Industries” written on the front. She types in her own password and immediately taps on an app.

Hacker has stopped typing to watch, while Kingpin stands up from his seat and stands behind her, laying his head on top of hers. Con Man walks over to them, a curious Magdalene trailing behind him a few steps behind.

Forgery types in the hero system password, nabbed directly from Hatsume’s tablet, which is basically the pre-selected password for the system plus Hatsume’s personal password. She stops with her hands hovering a few inches over the enter button.

Hacker gently tugs on Forgery's hair and shoots her a smile. She smiles back, her shoulders squaring despite her tiredness and presses enter.

The screen flashes green.

Assault lets out a breath he wasn't aware he was holding.

"Thank the fucking gods," mutters Con Man, too tired to try to dodge the half-hearted swat Magdalene sent his way. It doesn't have the desired effect since she looks like she's trying her hardest not to smile and her vines are waving as if caught in a non-existent gentle breeze.

Hacker lets out an unholy screech and pounces on Forgery squeezing her like her life depends on it, Kingpin coming to join her, smiling like sunshine.

"That was a great plan, Forgery," compliments Assault, while she smoothes out her dress and tries to fix her hair.

"I had a bit of inspiration close by," responds Forgery, pointing with her head at the giggling pinkette in her arms.

"No dodging out of compliments," chastises Con Man, poking Forgery on the side, causing her to burst out into giggles. Her three datemates stop to watch her with lovestruck smiles on their faces.

Many others would regard the situation as uncomfortable, probably worried about becoming the fifth wheel, but Assault has never felt like an extra part with the four of them around. His affection for them might not be romantic, but that doesn't mean he can't smile at their happiness.

Magdalene doesn't look like she can say the same for herself. Oh well. Besides, she's been getting along with Crusade much better, both of them still somewhat apprehensive of the situation. Not for long, though.

"Well, will you do the honors?" asks Kingpin, theatrically presenting a microphone towards Forgery. She takes it graciously, smiling wide.

"Attention all villains! Part one of four of the weapon's password has been retrieved! I repeat, part one of four has been retrieved!"

Cheers rise from the comms, some even sound like they'd just woken up to hear the news, and then gone right back to sleep.

“Fucking finally!” answers Powerhouse’s gruff voice, the echo over the line signaling he was probably at his base. “I was getting bored. When’s the whole drama performance bullshit going down?”

“It shouldn’t be too long,” responds Singularity’s monotone voice. “My team is ready and in position. We’ve already made an impression in the run-down parts of the city, it would be simply a matter of making ourselves known to the rest of the city.”

“Good,” says Kingpin, folding his hands in front of his face, a spark of green blooming from his eyes. He stays silent for a second, pulling up his digitized version of the planning board (also dubbed “madman’s love letter to crime” by Nightmare).

“Powerhouse, make sure no one of your team gets even close to Singularity’s. It’s essential to keep up the illusion that both teams are unconnected. Understood?”

“It isn’t me you should be saying that to, shitty Deku. What the fuck was up with that hare-brained stunt you pulled?!? Isn’t your team supposed to be a ghost-team or whatever?”

Kingpin sighs, massaging his temples. A frown appears on his face, etched deeply into his brow, and Assault can’t help but worry for Kingpin. He’s always known him to be optimistic and determined to a fault, so whatever’s between him and Powerhouse has to be bad enough to make him this angry.

“The footage was already deleted, and the police have been getting enough nonsensical tips about me that their systems are predisposed to think they’re being pranked,” explains Kingpin, tiredness beginning to bleed through his voice. “And my appearance alarmed the heroes enough to overlook more than a few things. My team is still a secret, yours is at large and Singularity’s is about to be in the spotlight. Everything’s going according to plan.”

“It better be, Deku. Otherwise I’ll–”

Assault’s comm beeps, Fractals' calm voice coming through it. “The southern sector’s gang has been acting up again. We’ve already attempted peaceful negotiations and stern warnings. What is the preferred course of action?”

“Oooooh,” cheers Hatsume. “Your first decision as Ally Officer! What’s it gonna be Mr. Bara Octopus?”

Forgery snorts at the nickname, while Kingpin bends over laughing, his face quickly turning red.

Assault is too busy thinking to react to the nickname.

The gangs were already all contacted, and those who were willing to cooperate were already brought into the fold by Fractal, with Con Man as a supervisor.

And now it was Assault's turn to handle the situation.

"Fractal, suit up for a fight."

He turns around, catching a parting glimpse of Kingpin's proud expression as he exits the room.

"They've already been warned. It's time they face the consequences."

A bright red countdown shines in the holographic screens, the numbers falling far too fast for Iida's liking.

Twelve minutes have already passed since the Kingpin's announcement, the first deadline nearing closer and closer still. Iida has absolutely no idea what the villains meant for "make some noise", but he's seen enough of the exercise for his mind to jump into worst-case scenarios.

"Iida?" calls Kendo from beside him, snapping him out of his thought spiral. "Everyone's already here."

"Good," responds Iida, getting up from his chair and straightening up. He begins walking along with Kendo, both of their faces stony.

Neither of them say anything else as they walk into the conference room. Whatever that had to be said had already been discussed. It was only a matter of bringing the results of their planning to the rest of the hero team.

The conference room is simple almost to a fault. Three rows of chairs and tables arranged in semi-circles, each one on a different level, almost like a miniature stadium. All tables face a holoscreen, currently displaying a generic background and the countdown in a corner.

Chatter abruptly cuts off, people pocketing their phones and looking up from their attempted naps.

Iida sighs. His careful cronogram had given all heroes the time needed for rest to maximize performance, but with the last few events it had all gone out the window and he didn't have the time to remake it again. He was being forced into improvising his organization system. That didn't sit well with him in the slightest.

Nevertheless, he goes up to the front, walking to the right side of the screen, Kendo taking the left.

Kendo nods towards Tokage, who activates the screen. They didn't have time to make an actual presentation, instead retrieving the images they needed and displaying them. Their quality was frankly subpar.

The image shows Hatsume in her workshop, talking with Nejire-senpai. She's covered in oil-stains and smiling wide.

"Thank all of you for coming," begins Iida, looking at the heroes' frowns and worried faces.

"We've been tricked," begins Kendo, skipping any and all introductions.

In any other situation, Iida would have been appalled at the lack of regard for formalities. Instead, he simply nods and begins a mental headcount of everyone present.

"This morning, Hatsume Mei went out alone during the attack on the buildings. She said nothing to anyone. She's been captured by the villains."

Iida frowns and begins his headcount again.

"The entirety of Team Yaoyorozu was eliminated," states Kendo, the image changing to show all of its members. Fukidashi, Kirishima, Awase and Hagakure, along with their leader Yaoyorozu, look on from the screen. "Asui and Ojiro were lost during the fires." Two other images appear on the screen.

Movement draws Iida's attention. He spots one of the Big Three, Amajiki-senpai, fidgeting in his seat. 'He looks like he wants to say something', Iida muses, but he shakes his head and begins the headcount *yet again* .

"To put it bluntly, we've failed you."

The room sinks into cold silence, some surprised faces popping up in the crowd-.

A few steps take Iida into center-stage, and Kendo comes along with him. Both of them bow in unison towards the assembled heroes.

“We’re sorry,” announces Iida, still bent at a ninety-degree angle. He takes a deep breath and stands tall once again. “Yet, apologies are not going to better our situation. We’ve been in the defensive long enough to understand things need to change if we want to win this.”

Kendo nods sharply and steps forward. “The villains are not playing around. We shouldn’t either.” She squares her shoulders, facing the audience with her head held high “We will show these villains why heroes always win in the end!”

Cheers rise from the crowd, Tetsutetsu even going as far as screaming “I’ll avenge you Kirishima!”

Beep, beep beep

Iida starts and whirls around to look at the screen. 40 minutes left. The first deadline is already on them.

He waits with bated breath.

None of their alert systems notify him.

“Uuuh, guys?” says Kaminari, looking at his phone. “You should probably see this.”

He passes his phone to Tokage, who blanches. Her fingertips fly to connect the phone to the screen. The background disappears, instead taken over by a bot magazine.

“HEROISM IS DEAD,” reads in bright red letters on the front page. The subtitle “Heroes: beacons of evil?” is written in black font under it. And under that there’s a photo of Koda, or at least a mannequin of him, laying on a mess of broken wooden boxes, stabbed through multiple miniature replicas of the Tokyo tower.

“Hero murdered by their own teammates, more on page 3,” reads Kendo, her voice dripping in disbelief.

“Ah,” slips right out of Iida’s mouth. “So that’s why my headcount was off.”

Kendo turns to look at him incredulously, so Iida quickly recomposes himself.

“Anyone knew about this?” asks Iida, trying to keep his voice even.

“I suspected something,” says Kaibara, his hands curled tight in front of him. “When we were out in the field, Hatsume jumped into our conversation through our comms. We didn’t think it was weird, you know how she gets, but now that I think about it, wasn’t she supposed to be working on Bondo’s armor? Why was she even near the comms?”

“She never was!” pipes up Nejire-senpai from her seat, as Togata-senpai and Amajiki-senpai discuss something in hushed voices. “She was working in her lab and answering my questions the whole time, wasn’t she?”

There’s a moment of silence as the information sinks in.

“We’ve been hacked,” says Midoriya, breaking the silence. “And the only person that knows how to fix that is *Hatsume* .”

There’s a quiet “damn” from Todoroki in the back. That’s the spark that sinks the conference room into chaos. People are throwing their comms off their ears or checking the walls for hidden cameras. Sero is offering pieces of tape for those who want to cover their cellphone and laptop cameras. Bakugou starts screaming into his comm, cursing out the villains.

And in the midst of it all, Iida is trying to calm everyone down but they just *won’t listen* and he has *no idea what to do* –

A burst of blue sends all of them tumbling down, papers and desks go flying. Iida stands up slowly, looking around at the mess.

“Are all of you going to listen now?” asks Nejire-senpai, one hand stretched out before her, and Iida realizes the blast must have come from her. “Cuz we have a big announcement! Don’t you guys want to hear it?”

A spark of hope lights up in Iida’s chest, and it grows as he watches the Big Three take center stage.

“We’ve decided to officially join all of you!” declares Togata-senpai, crossing his arms over his chest. Nejire nods vigorously while Amajiki simply glances at them before looking away and staring at the wall.

The three of the bow at the same time, saying in unison “Please take care of us!”, as though they were the new kids in the school, and were introducing themselves to the class.

Iida doesn’t pay any mind at their unintentionally goofy introduction, but instead, he looks at them and sees something the villains don’t have: years of experience.

‘And,’ he thinks, ‘that might be just what we need to win this war.’

Chapter End Notes

> Wooo! Hazzard and I have finally outlined the rest of the story to a more acceptable degree, so I'm optimistic about this!
>
> I actually tried to foreshadow Hatsume being tricked by Hacker on chapter 5, but it ended up being far too subtle XD. It's literally just *one* throwaway line. (Guess which one it is!)
>
> Magdalene becoming the spymaster was something completely unexpected to us, to be honest. She just became that out of the blue, but now I'm glad it happened! It gives her character more depth!
>
> I'm hoping to give more bits of trivia like this at the ends of chapters from now on. Do you guys like this idea? Whatever the case may be, thank you for reading and I hope to see you back again in the next chapter!

Execution of Ages

Chapter Summary

> Where shit goes down for everyone.

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

The harsh lights glared down at the podium, rows upon rows full of chattering robots waiting to pounce on the heroes with questions. Flashes broke out like a swarm of angry bees, directed at the four hero-hopefuls walking onto the stage, their heads held high and expressions neutral. None of the exhaustion they must be feeling is visible through the makeup they're wearing.

Komori, hidden to the side of the stage, was currently very glad not to be out there. The press conference hadn't even started yet, and the reporters were already a hair away from rioting.

Instead, Iida stood up and addressed the audience in his robot-like way, and immediately launched into a speech. Komori hit start on a timer. It was her job to make sure the whole press conference ran smoothly, and that included stopping Iida from talking the robots' ears off for an hour.

"Team Yanagi, report," came crackling from his comm, and Komori listened in, her tablet pen hovering a few millimeters above the screen. She also had to report anything of note to Iida, so the Paragon could be kept in the loop while the conference was still in progress.

"We have found traces of suspicious activity in this sector. However, the civilians haven't been very forthcoming on exactly what it is."

Komori suppressed a yawn with some effort and looked at the hour. 11:33 pm. Seven minutes away from the second mark the villains threatened.

"That's odd," responds Yanagi, her soft and calm voice taking on a worried edge. "That sector improved quite a lot ever since we extended our patrols nearby. Shouldn't that affect their cooperation

score in our favor?"

"It should, shouldn't it?" pipes up Nejire from the line. There's the hum of cars in the background, along with the occasional honking noise. "It's weird, right? But isn't it realistic? At least in my patrols, any area heroes didn't regularly go through villains ended up popping up like daisies! Even if it was two streets away from the patrol route!"

"Then why would the crime rate go down?"

"Don't you think there might be someone else dealing with villains too? Do you know if there are vigilante-bots in the city?"

"I don't know. Vlad King-sensei didn't mention anything about it and the rules didn't either."

"I wouldn't trust them too much," says Sero jumping into the conversation, and then realizes how rude that might have sounded. "It isn't that Vlad King-sensei is not trustworthy! It's just that Aizawa-sensei is fond of "logical ruses". It wouldn't be out of character for him to convince the other teachers to hide the existence of vigilante-bots."

"Wouldn't that be awfully familiar?" giggles Nejire, before a clank of metal comes through her end of the line. "Oooh, did we get the door open? Do you guys think there's something inside? I'll let you guys know! Bye!"

Komori wrote in hurried lettering "vigilante bots" in the note on her tablet. Her instincts were telling him that vigilante bots probably weren't a thing, but he couldn't think of what else it could be. At least she had *something* to report to Iida later.

Speaking of Iida, he looked like he was nearing the end of his speech.

"And we, the heroes, take full responsibility for our mistakes. However, we do not discard the possibility of foul play influencing our actions, and we are determined to get to the bottom of this."

There's a small commotion as the reporters argue for the privilege of talking first. Iida points to a random one, and the robot's first question is: "What proof do you have for this statement?"

It's Uraraka who answers this time, standing up from her spot. "There's this villain we've seen before with a brainwashing Quirk. We suspect this villain called Koda and dressed him up to imitate the

villain Animal. It wouldn't be too difficult to order him to run and take away the costume once he was dead. He was wearing a cloak after all."

Uraraka looks uncharacteristically serious, giving weight to her words. Komori knows it's paining Uraraka to sound as if they're suspecting this, because in reality they're completely sure.

They've already reviewed the footage. Shinsou recognized the slightly robotic movements as the exact kind his Quirk produces, and Midoriya had admitted with a grimace on his face that if he was in Kingpin's shoes, he would have come up with a very similar plan. (Multiple people had shot him wary looks behind his back. Komori can't help worrying about it.)

There's a murmur in the crowd, before the same reporter asks "But you have no formal records of these two villains?"

"No. We're working on getting proof though," says Uraraka, letting a smidge of her usual cheer slip into her voice, just to reassure the bots and drive their reputation up a bit.

Komori's trying to tell how many reputation points that gesture gave them when another message comes through his comm: "Team Jirou here. We've found three different places of interest so far."

Komori's eyebrows shoot up her forehead. "Three? How did you find them so fast?"

"I listen for suspicious activity, Togata-senpai uses his Quirk to take a peek, we mark the place for later and move on– Wait a sec."

She pauses, probably listening for something near her. Komori takes the time listen to Uraraka respectfully denying the accusations of the heroes trying to shift the blame of their actions to a villain.

"Make that four places of interest," informs Jirou. "At this rate, we'll find most of the villain bases in no time. Hey, Kendo!"

"Yes?" she responds, as a mess of chatter comes through her end.

"You should probably reassign Sero and Ashido to another task. Togata and I have the investigation part covered and Shishida's more than enough defense."

"Alright, tell them to come back to base," she states and cuts the line.

Komori doesn't want to imagine how busy she is coordinating thirty-five people on her own.

As Komori's writing down that new information, a new question breaks the pattern they had followed until now.

"Where are Kodi Koji's murderers?" asks a reporter, waving a sheet with the faces of the heroes in question. "Shouldn't they be here taking responsibility for what they've done?"

"Shiozaki Ibara, Rin Hiryu, Awase Yosetsu, Kaibara Sen and Aoyama Yuga are currently in city hall. They're on trial facing the consequences of their actions," answers Monoma, with a cordial smile on his face.

Komori's lips tighten at the lie. Awase is not at court, because Awase is *dead* . They haven't released that fact to the public yet. Their reputation would take a nosedive if that happened.

A murmur of assent breaks out in the conference room in response to Monoma's words, and Komori doesn't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing.

"But what about you?"

"Excuse me?" asks Monoma, hands behind his back as he watches the reporter that came forward. It takes Komori a second, but she notices that the bot bears a striking resemblance to Aizawa-sensei when he appeared on TV.

"What about facing the consequences of your actions?" says the Aizawa-bot raising a tablet with an article open on it. It reads "Hero infighting: the new enemy?", and is dated a few hours into the first day. The cover is of him engaged in a petty fight with Bakugou, a robbery going on in the background.

"What about those of Bakugou Katsuki?" says another bot, holding up another magazine titled "the heroic menace".

"And what about Mineta Minoru's sexual assault allegations?"

"And the collateral damage on the storefronts on 12th street?"

"The accounts of excessive force–"

One by one, the bots raise articles Komori wasn't even aware existed,

and his stomach sinks. The article exposing Koda's death wasn't the first article against heroes, he realizes. It was the article that broke the camel's back.

"Kendo! We have a situation on Saiban Square! My team and I got attacked and separated. I'm hiding right now, and I have no idea where the rest of us are–" There's a crash in the background, and a few robotic screams. Honenuki curses quietly and keeps talking. "But the villains are out in the open! I need backup *right now."*

"Right," answers Kendo, and there's a pause as she consults the police bot with her. The police systems are the only way they have to check that the messages are legitimate and not misinformation spread on the hacked comms by the villains. "We'll send a team towards you. Don't do anything rash."

The line goes silent again.

Komori looks back at the conference, where Tokage has gotten control of the situation, organizing the reporters like a conductor does an orchestra. A few marketable quotes later, and the reporters are hanging onto her every word.

She calls Iida's comm, now that the attention is not on him. She hates to be the bearer of bad news, but she refuses to let the villains take them by surprise again.

Sleight watches the square from the roof of a supermarket, her mask firmly in place. It's nearly midnight, but the lenses of her mask are equipped with night vision, allowing her to see the scene below her as if it was broad daylight.

Despite the late hour, the place is almost full of bots, the nearby nightclubs attracting partygoers and night owls onto the streets.

Not all of them have such base motives as having fun.

There's a group of figures setting up a stage in record time, despite the efforts of the police trying to hold them off. The police end up tangled in tape, knocked out in a second, welded to the ground, but not a single one of them is killed.

"We've finished up with the stage," says Metaphor through the comms. The only reason Sleight can spot him in the crowd only

because his speech-bubble head is very noticeable. The rest of him is dressed in nondescript black armor with a black mask, exactly like Sleight and the rest of the group.

“Understood,” answers Singularity, standing on a fire escape on a nearby skyscraper. “The accused are in place. We’re only missing an audience.”

“No we’re not,” replies Dart, stuck near the top of a telephone tower. “They’re already here, kero.”

The watch on Sleight’s arm beeps twice, signaling 11:40 pm.

Just on time.

Sleight double-checks her armor and guns one last time and jumps down from the supermarket, using a streetlight to swing herself onto the stage.

“Welcome heroes!” she calls, her voice amplified throughout the whole square. The heroes freeze. A smirk pulls at Sleight’s mouth at the obvious alarm in their faces.

There are exactly thirty-four masked figures in the square, and less than half are living beings. Not that the heroes know that. Hacker’s armor for the bots is very realistic, now that she has more *resources* at her disposal.

“Let the trial begin!”

As one, the mass of masked villains surge towards the heroes, swarming them in a second.

Tsunotori tries to fire her horns, but a few scales knock them off course and graze her head, drawing a thin line of blood from her temple. Tetsutetsu tries to use himself as a shield by placing himself in front of Tsunotori, only to be blindsided by a flying manhole cover changing directions mid-air, courtesy of Double Tap. A dart comes flying from above, burying itself into Sato’s shoulder, and a second one hits Yanagi almost immediately after. Another one hits Tsunotori, and the last one sinks itself right in the middle of the crack the manhole cover left in Tetsutetsu’s metal.

The paralytics in the darts act quickly, and the four heroes are tied with tape to the ground, right where the witnesses would be if the square was an actual courtroom.

“Bring the accused onto the stage!” commands Sleight, taking the position of the judge.

Kaminari and Mineta are dragged onto the stage, struggling against their bonds and blindfolds, but Shibari had gotten very good at creative ways of binding people with his tape.

Two more people enter the stage. Crusade, taking the position of the defendant, and Singularity, taking the position of the prosecutor.

“Kaminari Denki stands accused of three different accounts of sexual harassment outside of this city, and eight inside of it. Mineta Minoru stands accused of twenty-five different accounts of sexual harassment outside the city, and twelve inside of it,” begins Singularity, stoically watching his two classmates as they begin to sweat in their place.

A small crowd of curious civil-bots begin to form around the stage, as Crusade gestures for a hastily set-up projector to display every single proof they have managed to get in the past few days.

Outraged murmurs float through the crowds, as pictures of Mineta and Kaminari “flirting” with the civil-bots appear on the screen. There’s quite a bit of evidence. Both perverts thought that because they’re robots, they could get away with more, Sleight supposes.

“Their faults are quite clear,” announces Crusade, gesticulating wildly. “However, do not forget they are children still, prone to mistakes and misbehavior. To charge them with the severity of adults would be far too cruel, and to negate them the possibility of changing and becoming better heroes would be nothing but a waste of their potential.”

The paralyzed heroes try to express their agreement but can’t do more than babble half-formed sentences.

“How many more women would have to suffer for them to “grow as people” I wonder,” says Singularity, a hint of anger in his voice. His eyes are narrowed behind the blue tint of the masks’ lenses, chin raised and his hair hidden by the dark hood, and for a second Sleight thinks he looks exactly like–

“Five minutes until Tamaki-senpai and the rest of his team arrives,” croaks Dart into the comms.

Sleight shakes the image out of her mind and instead gestures for Crusade to continue.

“Well, how many people will they save?” he says, though there’s a strange expression on his face like he ate a lemon. Sleight has come to realize that Crusade can debate pretty well but loathes to contradict arguments he agrees with.

“That is enough,” Sleight announces, pondering her decision. She looks at the two heroes trying to talk through their gags.

In the end, there’s only one fitting punishment for those two.

She makes a hand sign and both Temperance and Basilisk, carrying plastic scalpels dipped in red paint, move forward and climb onto the stage behind the accused.

Singularity nods his approval of the punishment method chosen. Crusade takes a second more, eyes dark with memories, struggling with himself, but in the end, he realizes the difference between what happened to his brother, and what is happening now. He concedes.

“If the rules of heroism were followed in the way they were supposed to,” begins Sleight, moving towards the crowd, addressing them head-on. “As students, they should have been expelled after four of those incidents, and as heroes, they should have had their licenses revoked after three.”

At this, all heroes go very still.

“Hero impunity is far too normal, far too common, for the high standards the hero profession supposedly boasts.

If the authorities won’t do *anything*. If the heroes themselves refuse to take action on time, the burden falls onto the people to make sure justice still prevails.”

The crowd grows larger, despite the line of police that surrounds the plaza. Sleight gives the signal, and the two scalpel-wielding villains start to work, drawing thin lines of red paint all over the two bound heroes.

“Two months of forced leave on account of injuries. That, is their punishment,” sentences Sleight, watching as Kaminari and Mineta now look more like abstract art pieces. “Use the time to think about your actions.”

Both of them are trying to struggle out of their bonds, unaware they’re already out of the war. The first day is already practically over. The

can't shove the "healing" of multiple months into two days without Recovery Girl, after all.

"We are the Cleansers!" shouts Sleight, her voice sinking into the crowd, drawing robotic cheers from the audience. "And any crime the heroes fail to correct, any wrongdoing the state leaves unpunished is our duty to let justice be brought to it!"

"Villain reputation: 30%," says an automated voice through the comms. "Informant bot, unlocked."

That's their cue.

Sleight turns to leave, leaping from the stage by using an enlarged hand as a sort of pole vault.

The heroes scream almost in unison, and Sleight checks the time.

12:00 pm. End of the first day, and if the heroes' screams was any indication, the time were Hatsume's fate was decided.

"I can't imagine any of the fools who would think of taking you up on a date anyway." She hears Singularity comments.

A tearing sound behind her draws Sleight's attention. Her blood runs cold.

No.

On instinct she draws her grappling gun, and shoots it towards a window, not caring where she'll end up as long as it is away. She turned to see Kaminari stare at them with *unbridled furry as he charged up* .

"Don't you dare insult them YOU BASTAAAAAAAAAA-"

It's almost enough. A large shock covers the area.

Her world turns black.

Ten minutes until midnight.

That's what keeps running in Dead Drop's head as she bounces in

place, keeping herself warm for what's to come. The warehouse she's in reverberates with the sound of her footsteps and the soft chatter of the rest of the group, the only light coming through the windows, giving everything a silvery tinge.

"Excited for what's to come, mademoiselle?"

"Yeah! It's going to be so fun!" cheers Dead Drop, twirling around to face The Sparkle. "You're looking fabulous, by the way!"

He really went all-out with his costume, this time. He's in a long coat, exactly the kind an ancient French aristocrat would wear, except it shines with woven obsidian and silver threads. His low-heeled shoes look impossible to run in, but he'd said they felt just like sneakers when he'd tried them on. The biggest difference though is that instead of his glasses, he's wearing a full-face Venetian mask. Under the silvery moonlight, he looks like the ghost of a noble.

"Merci! I gave my best on its design. You're looking incredibly charming as well!"

Dead Drop laughs, giving a mock bow to him. She'd had a pretty fun time with her costume, mostly because she challenged herself to make it as different to her hero costume as she could.

The outfit consists of a plain seifuku with a Kansai collar, both the skirt and the shirt dark blue with a double white trim, which is paired with a red scarf that she ties loosely below. Over this she wears an oversized tan cardigan with a rather long hem and cuffs, and pockets on either side, the right one shown to hold a number of trinkets on either a keychain or a cellphone strap. She sports knee-length black socks and dark brown dress shoes with thick heels, the same as the outdoor uniform shoes students traditionally wear in Japanese schools.

However, there are also a few additional gadgets and pieces, such as her piped black mask, the boxes of knives strapped around her thighs, and a blue utility belt around her waist with more little green boxes attached to it on either side. The most noticeable new feature is the loose black mask she wears around her neck, which is decorated with pieces of pale metal in the shape of a carnivorous grin. She remembered Kingpin backing up when he saw this, and it made sense

given her inspiration.

“Stop with the fucking fashion show and get to your positions! ETA two minutes, so hurry the fuck up!”

Both of them snicker at their leader’s words, having learned to never take the tone of them seriously. Still, they obey his orders, mostly because they turn out to be good ones in the end (as long as they don’t go against Kingpin’s, that is.)

They both decide to climb a stack of boxes, Sparkle settling on them as if they were a throne, while Dead Drop decides to sit on the highest one and swing her legs back and forth.

She spies Powerhouse deciding to sit right in the middle of the room, slouching confidently. His armor, black, sleek and futuristic, is on standby right now, none of the orange glowing lines shining. His faceplate is open, hiding the Cheshire-cat snarl painted on it, and instead letting his smirking face show.

On his other side, there’s Slasher, a green bug-like mask on his face, while metal armor covers the pincers jutting out of his mouth. Blades protrude from his armor all over, the plates looking like a bug’s exoskeleton.

Beside him, Parasite softly giggles, in her costume that is covered with *live fungus* , a puffy costume that allowed plenty of ventilation. There was a back back that hummed, releasing a squirt in the air occasionally.

“Special package delivery!” comes through the villain team’s comms, and one of the upper windows of the warehouse softly opens. Overdose jumps through the window, carrying a weakly moving Hatsume, bound in an absurd amount of chains.

Overdose sets Hatsume down gently behind a pile of boxes and does a small salute, then jumps back out the window, joining the rest of Powerhouses’ squad in hiding and waiting for the heroes to arrive.

Not a minute later, the door softly opens. As negotiated beforehand, only one hero enters unarmed. Considering that hero is Honenuki, that doesn’t mean much.

“Five minutes until midnight,” drawls Powerhouse, grinning. “You

heroes are cutting it far too fucking *close.* ”

“Look, we just wanted to talk with your boss instead of a subordinate,” states Honenuki, crossing his arms over his chest.

“What the fuck do you mean?!? *I’m* the boss you brain-dead fucker!” shouts Powerhouse, small explosions coming from his palms and a snarl breaking out on his face.

That’s a lie. Kingpin’s the boss, but if they want to make all the bots believe there are only two different villain groups, and not three squads of the same group, they need to stick to their story. It’s a necessary sacrifice. That way, Powerhouse’s group can commit as many crimes as they want, without tanking the reputation of Singularity’s group who’s the one group that actually needs high reputation. Meanwhile, Kingpin’s group works from the shadows, puppeteering both groups and setting plans in motion.

She doesn’t resent that fact. But Powerhouse does, and she can plainly see his bitterness written on his face.

Then she notices the subtly smug grin in Honenuki’s face.

That’s when she realizes Honenuki asked that question on purpose. He’s trying to rile Powerhouse up, trying to breed resentment, and Dead Drop can’t let that stand.

“Honenuki, aren’t you forgetting something?” she giggles, and somersaults off her box, landing squarely beside Hatsume.

“What?”

Dead Drop giggles louder reaching into her belt, and lightly tapping for her miniature propulsors to extend and stick to Hatsume’s shoulders. From there it only takes a light tap from her quirk for Hatsume to lift off the ground, looking like a very pink drone.

“Boss is right! You’re awfully close to midnight, yaknow?” she says, letting a toothy smile slash out on her face.

Sparkle giggles and sparkles with mirth, subtly aligning one of the myriad of obsidian stones on his costumes with Hatsume, mostly because they aren’t obsidians, but “blunted” laser focusing arrays.

Honenuki stiffens, and unlatches a briefcase from his back gently laying on the ground.

“The money, as requested,” he says, opening the briefcase to reveal rows upon rows of neat bills, all of them with Nedzu’s grinning face on them.

Dead Drop struggles to not break character for a second, but in the end she manages not to laugh, checking the time one again. Three minutes left.

“At the same time?” suggests Slasher, and Honenuki nods, closing the briefcase.

Wordlessly, Honenuki kicks the suitcase across the ground, while Dead Drop motions her propulsors to fly Hatsume forward and return back to her.

Honenuki watches Hatsume, and turns to leave.

“Thanks for your purchase!” yells Dead Drop after him, doing her best imitation of a shop clerk.

Parasite dissolves into giggles, burying her face into her hands while Slasher’s shoulders shake.

Sparkle slings an arm over Dead Drop’s shoulders, launching into his palm. Powerhouse’s lips twitch into a smile for a split second.

The door of the warehouse slams shut.

The villains aren’t dumb enough to think that’s the end of it.

Dead Drop springs to her feet, clearing the empty crates over a corner of the warehouse to reveal the gleaming black car underneath.

Parasite throws herself in the back of the car, frantically tapping the screen on the backseat, which connects to the weapons systems. Sparkle goes in the middle back seat, connecting his laser arrays to the car. Powerhouse takes shotgun so he can use the shotgun, a wild grin on his face. Slasher’s blades retract with a metallic *shing!* and he gets into the driver’s seat.

Dead Drop’s the last to enter, so she can hear the gunshot perfectly.

“Hatsume’s out!” cheers Hacker into the comms. “Heroes are trying to guess where the shot came from. I’m too far to be spotted but I won’t be for long! Powerhouse, you better give my baby a chance to shine!”

“Don’t fucking tell me what to do Pink Demon! Slasher!”

“On it!” he says, stomping on the gas. The car roars to life, shooting forward and slamming the warehouse’s door into pieces.

The split-second glimpse of the heroes’ surprise makes everything worth it.

“Woohoo!” screams Dead Drop tapping into her own weapon terminal, blasting high-pressurized glitter at a screaming Bakugou. She obviously takes a photo of that.

She notices a flash of blond hair peeking out from the ground and shrieks “Lemillion incoming!”

Parasite fires a barrage of Red Goo at him at the same time Slasher tales a hard left. Lemillion is still on their trail.

“Fuck off!” screams Powerhouse, letting the car drop hundreds of tiny grenades. Lemillion peeks out for a second before sinking back down as the grenades detonate.

He tries to shoot back up from the ground.

Sparkle giggles “It’s time to shine, darling!” The thin laser he lets loose burns a hole straight through Lemillion’s hair.

Dead Drop takes a picture of that too, through her tears and aching belly.

The hacked heroes’ feed crackles to life on the car’s speakers.

“Heroes, Operation All or Nothing! Go!” orders Kendo, steel shining through her voice.

…

That wasn’t in the plan, was it?

Those Who Observe

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

> For clarification: Present Mic, Nedzu, All Might, Eraserhead, Power Loader and Vlad King are the only teachers that got transported to the canon universe. There is only one of every other teacher.
>
> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing
>
> Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The viewing room prepared with the seriousness of war as two forces from separate worlds, similar yet different, geared up to fight to the bitter end for the title of winners.

And it all would be observed with thorough minuteness by the calm, collected and intelligent teachers.

"Why the hell am I a parakeet?"

… Maybe Eraserhead was pushing the praise, given Mic's comment was the first official one on the record.

'On second thought, strike the praise altogether' thought Eraserhead, looking at the room with critical eyes. The screens were not on yet, despite the fact that he knew the villains had begun entering the city as soon as 1 am, and it was already 5:34 am. The bets were still going on, and notebooks, snacks, alcohol and energy drinks were strung all over the place.

"Mic, the Power Loaders were in charge of designing the robots," said Nedzu, the villain one, as he waited for his counterpart to write down the last few bets."And since they had to deal with the aftermath of the, ahem, *'Mechapocalypse'* –"

A shiver went down the room as Kayama licked her lips in remembrance. That reminded Eraserhead that he needed to find and

burn the last fifteen blueprints of that particular abomination fast.

"–I decided to give the Power Loaders as much artistic creativity as they wanted, and some more leisure time for the next three days … so expect some irony with the robot designs."

"Okay … but why a parakeet," whines Present Mic, his counterpart nodding along beside him. They get their answer when Kayama suddenly stands up and tells 13 to hold up her hair. She starts flapping her arms exactly like Mic does, while screeching "EVERYBODY SAY HEY" at the top of her lungs, over and over again. She does look like a demented bird, Eraserhead surmises.

"Kayama, are you drunk already?" tuts Chiyo, also known as Recovery Girl, looking at the bet book for the last time before she has to go to her post at the infirmary.

"I'm tipsy at most!" she shoots back, and does a flip to prove it complete with a curtsey at the end. "And I have good reason to be."

She then winks at the villain teachers, but her eyes scream with the knowledge of how much sanity she's going to lose by the end of this.

"Are you serious, Power Loader? Power Loaders, whatever," Kan grumbled, glancing at … Eraserhead craned his neck to see the Vlad-bot dressed in a far too skimpy outfit, apparently giving lessons to a bunch of other bots on how to pole-dance. "I didn't even teach Monoma *or* Larceny how to do that, why the hell would you give me that role?"

Both Power Loaders just snicker and high-five, looking well-rested for the first time since the two dimensions got into contact.

"Well at least I'm not a … construction bot?" Vlad asked, looking at the bot in question, sporting a bright orange helmet over his full-face mask.

"... I feel insulted for not getting something funnier," Snipe sighed, taking a bite of beef jerky.

"Honestly I don't think it's so bad. It's a great way to break tension as we hang around an–" Toshinori got interrupted with a tap on the shoulder and pointed to a police camera.

Eraserhead raised an eyebrow as a bot that looked exactly like All Might's smaller form gave orders to a group of police officers, wearing

a police uniform himself.

“Different role, same persona,” remarked All Might, who leaned over and whispered towards his counterpart, “It really is ironic, isn’t it?”

Eraserhead had not time to think over that remark, because in that precise second his own counterpart unzipped his sleeping bag and burst out of it.

“Start the viewing already,” he grumbled, shooting an annoyed look at the Nedzus surveying the room from a corner like a set of haunted house statues.

“Very well then!” they chirped, still in that unnerving unison, before scurrying away to the screens. “For the sake of convenience, remember to call the villain’s teachers by their aliases, and the heroes’ teachers by their names!”

The devices lit up, and the teachers finally settled down and opened their notebooks, quieting down.

“Looks like we have a difference right from the get go!” pointed out Hizashi, while Present Mic did an exaggerated pantomime of a detective. “Our dear heroes have stuck together and decided to head out to their HQ as a group, while the villains have all spread out! Holy moly, look at the sheer number of bases they’re setting up!”

“That means the villains will most likely try to use hit-and-run tactics or something similar,” piped up Aizawa, looking at the students like a hawk. “Those are always easier when there’s multiple places to run to.”

“Aren’t they more likely to get picked off one by one, though?” asks Cementoss, squinting at the dozens of individual screens depicting the villains, and at the joined screen showcasing the heroes. There’s safety in numbers after all.

“If they don’t manage to pull it off, certainly. Though I would be more worried about the sheer amount of management that conducting so many small teams– there’s something there,” says Aizawa, pointing at the heroes’ screen, specifically at one hero wandering away from the group.

The hero gets closer, looking curiously at a tiny cube making noise.

From another camera, he can see Smuggler and the hero’s villain

counterpart waiting underground, right below the cube.

Without a single sound, the hero gets pulled down through softened dirt into Smuggler's tiny underground chamber and knocked out. It's the work of a few seconds for the counterpart to swap costumes with the hero and break the hero's comm, before getting spit out of the ground.

The villain in a heroes' costume simply walks back to where the rest of the heroes are and shows Hatsume his broken comm with an apologetic bend to his shoulders.

Meanwhile, Smuggler shoots the hero point-blank.

None of the heroes suspect a thing.

"What… did the villains just slip a spy into the heroes' ranks?!? The game hasn't even started!" exclaims 13, their voice crackling inside their helmet.

"The rules said that the game begins as soon as both teams are inside the city," explains Eraserhead, already making notes about the heroes' and villains' respective organization systems. "And the villains managed to find a way to use that loophole in their favor. Like always."

"You have to admit that swap was flawless, though," Kayama says, drumming her nails on the smooth surface of her notebook. "They chose a target that frequently wanders out of the group and doesn't talk much, so the difference is not likely to be noticed in the long-run. Breaking the comm was an inspired decision, since it gives a rational explanation as to why the comm is not working anymore, with the hero being dead and all.

However, the most important parts of this is that by having Hatsume repair the comm and give it back to the spy, all the bots in the city will think the spy is the right person. They circumvented your recognition-by-comm system, Power Loaders."

"And the last element of the ruse," interrupts Aizawa, signaling for Kayama to stop showing off and to get back to her seat. "Is that, what hero is going to think they got a spy slipped into their ranks *three minutes in?* "

Majima Higari starts to fiddle with some spare parts twenty minutes into the exercise, and creates a hand-held solder out of them an hour later.

When Power Loader, his villain version, told him about how the exercises were "typically a test of the teacher's attention span and ability to hold in pee, but with this specific class you never know how things are going to turn out", he'd underestimated just how *boring* things could get.

You'd think with *two Hatsumes* running around on opposite teams there would be **some** form of destruction by now.

As fate would have it, the 1-A and 1-B teams started to get into a yelling match, sparked by Monoma yet again.

"We really need more joint exercises with them," he idly comments, making an offhand note.

"Strangely enough, he seems *less* enthusiastic than usual," Vlad King comments with a curious look. … wait, that was LESS? Jeez, and he thought dealing with the Support kids was bad.

"But he has a point, this infighting will only get them hurt in the end. I'll try to set up some team activities in the future," Aizawa says as he writes down some notes.

"Hey Majima." He turns to Kayama, who points to the screen where–

"Oh hell no!" The villains were *cutting into the bot* . That would have made sense from a logical standpoint, but … "We spent *fifty six hours* on these designs and they just start cutting them up immediately!"

He felt a dark presence, turning to see a stern glare from Aizawa directed at the screen. "The bots are constructed with human anatomy in mind… if they know how to break them apart they would know how to do it to a real human too." At that statement a cold chill fell in the rest of the room.

"They seem almost … *giddy* at the prospect as well," Yagi comments, gingerly dabbing a bloodied napkin to his mouth, talking for the first time in a while.

"Looks like they plan on hacking said designs." Power Loader said

with a sigh, ignoring the tension. “On the plus side she’ll have to undo that high tech security syste–and she’s in,” he comments at her giddy expression of success.

His villain counterpart seemed … too alright with this. They all did, the teachers from the other world, they seemed to EXPECT this from the students … what had happened?

13 watches with curious eyes as Extortion enters the editorial’s building, none of the robots recognizing her as a villain, and immediately making a name for herself inside the company as a freelance reporter hired for her expertise in hero-related articles.

It is mesmerizing to watch, as Extortion behaves exactly like a carbon-copy of the Yaoyorozus, even going as far as replicating her nervous tick of folding and refolding her hands in front of her.

Kayama is practically singing praises towards that decision. She out of all the teachers knows best about the kind of havoc the villains can wreak with the media in their hands. Because that’s what Extortion’s doing, really. She’s influencing her coworkers, subtly planting doubts in their minds, slipping files and USB’s into computers using her quirk, making sure that the data against heroes reaches her coworkers first, and the data in favor second.

It’s censoring the media without ever uttering a word about doing so.

“Well… Eraserhead, do you pretty-please promise to get Extortion contacts with the hero underground once she graduates? I’ve heard Sheherezade would *love* to get her hands on an intern, and it would be such a *shame* to waste her potential…”

“If I say yes, will you shut up?” grumbles Eraserhead, and takes another sip of what looks to be a six liter bottle of expresso shots.

“Thank you, darling! If there’s anything I can do to repay you…” she says, voice husky and low, one hand resting on her hip, leaning closer to him.

“Yooooo, hands off my husband!” screeches Present Mic, making use of his pointy hair to stab it in Kayama’s face. Eraserhead mumbles a quiet thanks to him and shoves himself deeper into his sleeping bag.

Vlad King has been worrying this whole *goddam* time, and his shoulders are starting to kill him. He’s pretty sure his back has more knots than a sailor's knot-tying manual and it’s just a matter of time before they all tangle themselves into the muscle version of a Gordian knot.

And all because of the Problem Children. The capitalization is *completely* justified.

“Please tell me how the hell they convinced *Magdalene* to manage a spy ring? That girl is a saint!”

“Really? Right now she looks more like a fallen angel,” teases Kayama, who slings her arms over Toshinori’s and All Might’s shoulders and smirks.

“Thirty dollars, and yes I mean *dollars,* not yen, that it was Kingpin who convinced her,” Snipe yells from the back, where he is rummaging in the mini fridge for a jar of pickles. He likes eating those straight out of the jar, Vlad King remembers and wishes he could scrub that information out of his mind.

“They technically didn’t convince her,” begins Nedzu, and Vlad doesn’t want to bother with looking which one it is, not with the headache he has. “Kingpin simply assigned her to Con Man’s spy operation, and Con Man took the care to give her the most innocuous duties at the start, slowly shifting all the responsibility to her until she handled the entirety of the spy ring on her own. It’s a “boiling frog” strategy, in the end.”

Then they see Fractal, normally stoic and unreadable, lose control of her quirk for a split second, spilling water all over the table. Her eyes are wide, her mind seemingly in another place as she wipes up the puddle on her table.

"...Nedzu, can you turn on the sound for that Fractal and Magdalene?" asks Kan, brow furrowed, for the first time matching Vlad's own level of worry. The conversation between the two girls does nothing to alleviate those worries.

"" *Everytime we think of villains, we get those images from the news of villains fighting and robbing stores, or the ones from the movies where they're strolling about their evil layer and building doomsday machines but we forget they still breathe, still talk, still have family and favorite foods and still get songs stuck in their heads .*""

Vlad King blinks at Fractal's words, watching as her normally impassive face shifts into disbelieving surprise. He hadn't seen her this worried since the Training Camp Attack.

"We've– we've demonized them so much in our heads that they seem so alien! And I just realized we think of civilians a bit different too! Civilians, heroes and villains. The three species of humans. "

There is an uncomfortable silence in the room as her words sink in among the Pro Heroes. He already knows why she thinks that way, why she's having this revelation right now but he doesn't want to say it, it looks like none of his coworkers want to either, but the knowledge sits in his throat–

"That would be the propaganda," drawls Snipe, twisting the cap of the pickle jar open and drinking the liquid out of it. "Surprise! Everything you thought you knew is wrong! You've been brainwashed as soon as you learned how to talk!"

"Please, don't be so cynical, Snipe-san," says Toshinori, while All Might stays uncharacteristically silent.

"What else would you call it? You've seen little kids running around in the parks, playing heroes and villains and pretending to beat the shit out of the villain and then throw 'em into jail. And then they grow up with those dumb highschool campaigns with the grinning hero posters frowning at villains smoking or drinking or doing drugs. Then villain rehabilitation centers get vandalized because they're "helping villains", and those incidents *always* make the news, don't they?"

Toshinori doesn't respond. Instead he looks down at his cup of coffee frowning deeply into it, the edges of guilt beginning to creep up on his face.

Vlad doesn't know what to think. If he stops to consider what motives

and dreams and aspirations drove each villain he apprehended into doing the things they did, would he have the heart to stop them?

He doesn't know.

He thinks about something else.

As soon as the hero team conformed by Shiozaki, Rin, Awase, Kaibara and Aoyama report the sight of a villain, Yagi knows something's wrong.

It's the cloak that tips him off. "Animal" is wearing a cloak, ripped and tattered and menacing, but last time he saw, Animal was inside a villain base with access to the sewers, commanding his furry army to try and sneak into the Central Police station. A quick check of the locations of the villains confirms his suspicions.

"Nedzu? Could you please rewind the footage a few minutes and follow the "villain's" location?"

Yagi sees the ears of the Principal twitch in amusement, probably at how slow they were at catching on to the ploy.

"Sure!" he says, and the footage blinks as it goes back, and then stops.

It isn't Animal, but Koda standing in the middle of the frame, lagging behind from his group.

Con Man is hidden behind a dumpster, his voice-changer on his face and primed for use. He doesn't even use the voice-changer at first, since the leader of Koda's team is Shinsou himself. He only has to say Koda's name, and he responds.

Koda's eyes glaze over, and he doesn't protest when Con Man takes his comm and speaks into it, using Koda's voice. The message itself isn't that important, just a notice that there were a few pigeons "Koda" wanted to talk to, but it got the heroes off of their backs.

A hastily put on cloak later, and the brainwashed Koda was running alongside Con Man, weaving through back alleys and climbing up fire

escapes, to get to the other hero team.

After that it all happened fast. Aoyama spotted “Animal”, alerted his team, and all of them chased after him. “Animal” followed orders to perfection, running exactly where Con Man had told him to, and when he snapped out of the brainwashing, it was too late.

He was already being pushed off of the roof and into the crates.

“Hey, why is he marked as dead?” asked Hizashi, poking Power Loader on the side. “Those crates looked plenty safe to me!”

“Because,” begins All Might, looking sharply at the screen. “The rules said the students couldn’t actually kill any of their classmates. If those crates had been full of miniature, metal replicas of the Eiffel Tower, we would be dealing with a corpse right now. As such, the villains filled the crates with *foam* replicas of the Eiffel Tower as stand-ins for their plan.” All Might sighs, sinking further back into his seat, and rubbing a skeletal hand on his face. “And the heroes fell into the trap headfirst. Exactly like last time.”

No one had the time to let that sink in, because at that moment the accidental hero murderers got a call. Yagi only had the time to note that the call’s ringtone was morse code and that Con Man had swiftly ripped the cloak from Koda’s body to expose his hero costume, before Powerhouse’s voice came through the line.

Yagi was pretty sure Powerhouse wasn’t making any kind of effort to appear villainous, yet he still did. That kid had a long way to go to be fit to be a hero, especially when comparing him to his hero counterpart.

And then the bombs detonated.

“WHAT THE FUCK,” shouted Hizashi, pointing at the buildings on fire, his hair starting to fall out of his signature hairdo, golden strands sticking to his face. “WHAAAAAT THE FUUUUUCK?!?”

“Oh, hell. It started,” whimpers Vlad King, the resignation of a man in

death row shining through his eyes.

“ *Started.* You’re telling me this is just the *start?”* says 13, their eyes so wide they look like snowballs. “I thought this was an all-out assault to wipe out the heroes early!”

“I wish,” says Power Loader, bringing up the statistics of the damage in his tablet. “They did something similar last time. Incredibly useful for intimidation and covering up the tracks of what they’re really doing. Oooh, look at that, hero down.”

Hizashi looks with wide eyes as Asui Tsuyu is shot in the back of her head… by her own grinning counterpart. That's just messed up.

“I’m betting right now that they’re going to try and and use panic as a weapon,” calls out Eraserhead, pointing at the disappointed face of Asui, walking out of the city alongside one of Ectoplasm’s clones.

“Huh, what makes you say that?” answers Snipe, distracted from analyzing the weapons-mastery the villains exhibited, sounding a little dazed.

“Asui is one of the most level-headed students in the class, along with Ojiro. If things escalate in the way I expect them to, fear is going to quickly spread amongst the heroes’ ranks. Without level-headed students, that is going to hit much harder. “

“Okay, who was the idiot who taught them and okayed all of *this*,” says Kan, waving his arm erratically at the screens.

The four idiots in question look at each other before raising their arms.

“Eraserhead, Snipe, I expected that from you. Power Loader, I didn’t think you’d be dumb enough to teach a bunch of teenagers how to set up explosives. But Nedzu?!? You helped with this?!?”

“Well, I am an educator first and foremost. It would simply not do to waste such splendid ideas the students came up with themselves.”

“Wait…” interjects the Nedzu from the hero universe, his ears suddenly perking up in surprise. “The students were the source of everything? The method acting included? I thought you influenced them in that direction.”

A chittering laugh, tinged with a slight hint of madness, rises from the

Principal of the villain universe, his smile showing teeth that would be more at home on a predator than a prey. “Oh, not at all. It all started with our dear students, Kingpin specifically being the source of it. It’s truly astounding to see the reach of his charisma and ability to influence. Even more astounding to see with how much fervor his classmates responded to his efforts. It’s quite the interesting experiment, isn’t it?”

The hero Nedzu is silent for a second.

“I might have made a slight miscalculation.”

Both Eraserheads snort, wearing matching Cheshire-cat smiles. “You think?”

“And, I might have induced you into making that slight miscalculation,” grins the villain Nedzu, thrilled to have gotten a one-up on his hero counterpart. “Though please, let’s keep watching. I have a feeling the villains have something to show us.”

The burning warehouse, the one that seemed the least priority, is surrounded by a team of villains that watch with glee as Team Yaoyorozu arrives on the scene and starts with the rescue efforts.

A few seconds later, out from their van comes … a mech. That was the best way to describe it. Really, Power Loader is both thrilled and apprehensive to watch another mech in action. The Mechapocalypse is still a bit too fresh in his mind for that, but this one creation, the way it moves, is simply *sublime.*

“What is that? And why is it legal?” asks Kayama, sweating a bit, instinctively leaning away from the screens.

“That is the Katsu K2, filled to the brim with weeks worth of sauna sweat, so legal ammunition,” Power Loader says with a small grin, although he too was sweating. “Hacker designed it, so I don’t kno–”

It fires, round after round after round. Packs filled with sweat, water cannons, all of it was fired with sparks at max speed. The building

never stood a chance as onslaught after onslaught hit it. The side buildings not faring any better as stray sweat-bullets hit them. The armor popped off when it lost ammo, showing smaller compartments that fired on their own. After a full minute the massive pile of armor was on the ground, red from welding sparks. Powerhouse was breathing heavy, wearing a slimmer suit underneath, as his villain teammates stared at the destruction.

Powerhouse talks a bit into his comm as Nedzu turns on to hear it. “Hacker, don’t take this the wrong way, but if you weren't with the nerd I would make out with you for an hour straight.” He grinned at his own carnage. “It was fucking worth every hour in that sauna. Come on guys, let’s pack up and leave!”

Tank nods and hardens himself, grabbing the scorching steel with little problem as they move it into the van and drive away.

“... You know, looking at all that destruction, I think he just pulled a Deku. Just without the self-harm part,” Vlad comments, the glaring from Aizawa only reinforced the idea.

“That level of destructive power … they cleared the area with fear before they fired, so no civilians will be involved,” All Might comments. “The kid has knack for on-the-moment planning … if they manage to get that thing reloaded …”

Eraserhead nods. “This is getting troublesome. At this rate, having the Big Three in the heroes’ team might not even slow them down.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure,” counter both Nedzus, talking in unison *yet again.* “The Big Three have years of experience over the villains. Once they get their bearings on the kind of stakes this exercise has, they’ll start to become a problem.

Until then, enjoy the show!”

“Efficient.” That was the only thing Eraserhead said at the capture of the Yaoyorozu Team, after it was carefully extricated from the still-smoking rubble of the warehouse. Both Hagakure and Kirishima were

executed on the spot, while Yaoyorozu, Fukidashi and Awase were instead stuffed into crates. Then Shibari, the villain Sero, ordered a group of gang-bots to take those crates into the Villain Labs, a warehouse identical to the hundreds of others in the industrial section fo the city.

"... Is anyone else vaguely terrified of what the villains are going to do with with *three* hero hostages?" asks 13, stuffing the books they had brought into a hidden pocket in their costume, instead giving their full attention to the happenings on-screen.

"Four," points out Snipe, as Hatsume gets out of the labs in the midst of the chaos and jumps in one of the hero vans, driving straight for the fire on the skyscraper, the one beside the casino.

She doesn't notice the old, battered, possibly stolen car that begins to follow her a few streets in.

" *No,"* mutters the hero Power Loader, Majima Higari. "No, no, *no,* ***no!*** What are you doing Hatsume?!? Their whole gear supply depends on you! You're a gearmaker, you're *valuable* – aaaaand they boxed her in."

It was true. Hatsume had just tried taking a shortcut through an alley and found herself blocked off by another van. From the other car stepped out–

"Are those, uh, Suffocate and Double Tap?" asked Kayama, after briefly looking them up in the files. "They're more like an execution team than a capture one…"

Double Tap then proceeds to rip the door from the van all on his own and drags Hatsume out by her leg. Hatsume struggles, blindly lashing out and gripping the steering wheel like her life depends on it. It's not enough and she's torn away from the car.

She tries to scream but Suffocate uses his quirk to breathe a solid air cube around her face, muffling her voice. She tries to reach her comm, but her hand only scratches ineffectually at the box, unable to activate the device on her hear.

Her struggles weaken as the oxygen in the box slowly dies out, and she slumps in the middle of the street.

"So that's where the name came from," grumbles Eraserhead and writes something on his tablet.

“Doesn’t this worry you?” snaps Aizawa, staring holes into his counterparts. “They’re taking this exercise far too… seriously. Not one of them flinched at Hatsume’s screams, and they just continued on without pause. This isn’t natural.”

“You’re right, it isn’t. Because they’ve tested this maneuver multiple times, understood when to stop and when to keep going, learned by heart exactly when their screams turn from simple fear into terror,” says Eraserhead, not taking his eyes off of the screen. “They’ve learned to be far stronger than we were at their age, because they know now that the world is much crueler than it seems.”

“So they must be crueler than it?” shoots back Aizawa. “They’re going far too much into the villain mindset, and this kind of thing is exactly the situation where slippery slopes happen. Too much pressure can cause snaps in mentality–”

“Guys, guys, you’re both pretty,” Hizashi said in an attempt to lighten the mood. The glares that turned to him said otherwise. He raises his hands up in a pacifying gesture. “Jeez, just trying to lighten the mood here.”

“Aizawa has a point though,” says Nedzu, the villain one. “Though not because of what you’re thinking. It seems to me as if… no, it’s too early to say. I need a bit more data.”

“Like *that* kinda data?”

As one their heads turn to the screen just in time to see Kingpin appear in the hero screens, grinning mask firmly in place, as he gleefully informs the hero team of Team Yaoyorozu’s fate in voice that sounds like poison-coated candy.

It’s jarring, Toshinori finds, to see Kingpin like this, because his smile, his voice, his everything… he has seen it before. Every single time he had paid young Midoriya an unexpected compliment, he had seen the same joy and self-satisfaction in his eyes, if only for a second before the embarrassment set in.

There's no embarrassment this time, just pure cheerfulness.

Until Bakugou speaks.

Then his tone changes so fast it gives Toshinori whiplash, flinching at the steel in his voice and instinctively tensing up, wanting to step in between the two to prevent Kingpin from wiping the floor with Bakugou–

Kingpin's voice goes back to his joyful pitch, and Toshinori is frozen for a second.

Had they told him a week a go, more or less, that he'd be worried that *Midoriya* was going to start a fight with *Bakugo* , he would have wondered if future-him had lost his mind.

"I had my suspicions before, but now I know there must be something deeper going on with those two," says All Might, running a hand through his hair. "Both Bakugo-Midoriya pairs know something they're not telling us. It's the only reason that could possibly drive Kingpin to behave like… *this."*

'Like he was going tie Bakugo to a post and gut him slowly?' thinks Toshinori, mentally completing the sentence.

He is wrenched out of his thoughts when Hatsume is put on display for the heroes to see, Hacker and Kingpin smiling from ear to ear at the heroes' reactions.

It isn't until Hacker viciously yanks on her counterpart's hair that Toshinori realized he has made a slight miscalculation as well. He knows the Midoriyas' ability to inspire other people to do better like the back of his hand. He had been subjected to it, after all.

But now, as he watches both villains work together flawlessly to intimidate the heroes into not thinking rationally, a possibility unfolds in his head.

A villain with a smile like sunshine and power used to protect, ruling not through fear but through genuine kindness. A villain receiving anyone into the fold with open arms, not caring if they were an enemy, a spy or both, because in the end, they will inspire them to do *better* .

And if 'being better' happens to be being the better *villain*…

Toshinori shudders.

Fear is more easily broken free from than kindness, after all.

“Did any of you two teach Assault how to manipulate?” asks Hizashi, staring at the screen as Assault weaves the truth around Hatsume, using the right words to make her even more desperate to escape.

“No, we didn’t,” responds one of the Nedzus. “We did, however, teach Kingpin how to manipulate people.”

“Well, this just makes one thing clear,” states Aizawa, without looking up from his notes. “We’d be idiots not to hire Kingpin as a UA professor in the future.”

“If you want to deal with the headache, go ahead,” grumbles Power Loader, schematics spread around him, full of little notes for improvements. “But let me tell you that if you do, get prepared for a whole lot of change in UA.”

Hizashi spots a grin appearing in Eraserhead’s face, and that’s more than enough to pique his curiosity.

“What kind of change would happen, my dear listener?” HIzashi asks, elbowing Present Mic so he can join him in making puppy faces to convince Eraserhead to talk. It seems to do the trick.

“Did you know they created a Heroics Study Group?” reveals Eraserhead, his smile growing fractionally.

“A lot of UA students do, so what’s the whole riff raff about?”

“For starters, it’s for both heroics classes–”

Not very common, but has happened before.

“–and for anyone from General Studies that wants to join the hero course.”

Hizashi blinks. That is definitely new. In the history of UA, Gen Ed

and the Hero Course have always tended to not interact much outside from the Sports Festival, and that's understandable. The Gen Ed kids are the ones that failed to get into the Hero Course; no one wants to interact with people that managed to follow their dreams when you couldn't.

Until now, apparently.

"After Con Man joined the hero classes and they realized just how powerful he is, they started to question the entrance exam even more harshly. And like all good villains, they hatched a plan to get their way."

"On the surface, the Study Group seems like a bandaid measure," says Nedzu, continuing Eraserhead's train of thought. "Their goal is to get forty kids from General Studies into the Hero Department. That seems harmless enough, it's just helping their classmates after all. Yet, UA has enemies. Enemies that are always waiting to find a flaw in our school, something, anything, to tear it down. If that many General Studies kids manage to get into the Hero Course and thrive in it, they'll pounce on the evidence that UA's Entrance Exams are flawed and scream it for the world to hear,

The 'Hero Class Villains', as they are called, are quite literally hanging the threat of a PR nightmare over our heads, if we do not do something to make the Entrance Exam fairer."

"And that's the Hero Villains' way of doing things in a nutshell," says All Might, a note of amusement and worry in his voice.

"So we have two Hero Classes capable and willing to mutiny if they find something to fight for," deadpans Kan, opening a bottle of vodka with his teeth. "Joy."

"Doesn't that seem counterintuitive?" asks Present Mic, looking as the villains lead by Singularity shred another group of gang-bots. "I mean, gang-bots are a pretty effective way to distract the heroes from noticing them. Why would they play the vigi– oh ooooooh."

‘Oooh’ is correct, muses All Might, as the villains finish up their massacre, to the cheers and relieved faces of the red-district bots formerly under gang control. There’s a small celebration, and a few of the villains sneak away the robot pieces.

All Might knows they’re going to hang those robots parts all over the windows of the gang-bot bases. Meanwhile, their reputation points go up, little by little.

“Considering that the murdered bots are all from gangs that refused to cooperate with the villains, and that those territories are remarkably devoid of heroes, it isn’t counterintuitive at all. It’s a rather elegant way of working the system in their favor,” concludes Nedzu, swirling a cup of tea between his paws.

“Sometimes I wish your programming wasn’t so realistic, Power Loader,” sighs Toshinori, looking at the patrol routes the heroes had drafted.

The problem was easy to spot. The heroes had done exactly the most logical thing, which was balancing the reputation gain with area coverage in their patrol routes. Except, this ended up creating more patrol routes in wealthier districts and less in poorer ones. It’s an uncomfortable reflection of reality, one he’d tried to disregard while he was still All Might, responding to any and all crimes that he could.

Looking back, that hadn’t been enough.

“Speaking of reputation, isn’t that a *juicy* article I spot?” purrs Kayama, licking her lips slowly, a sadistic glint in her eyes. “The heroes better know how to handle a little hate. They’ve been far too busy with saving people after the fires to care about reputation. That’s a mistake! Let’s see if you’ve learned that *lesson.* ”

A lesson that in All Might’s opinion should never have been learned in the first place. No hero should have to worry about their public image when there are lives at stake.

Too bad All Might realized that only after he lost his powers and young Midoriya became Kingpin once and for all.

“You know, we never really get sane heroes do we?” Hizashi offhandedly comments as he watches the press conference go on.

“The problem is that no one sane would ever be a hero in the first place,” Vlad says with a sigh.

“It’s a little paradox. When one applies to be a hero, they apply to risk their lives in the fires of danger. A little *quirkiness* now and then is expected, but … no logical person who wants to live a long and healthy life would take the risk,” hero Nedzu says. “These kids know that they need to risk their lives, and do everything they can to ensure they have no regrets.”

“However … maybe we could check for some more serious issues during the entrance test. Perversion can be nipped in the bud, but … depression and hate are not things to be ignored,” villain Nedzu replies, as they watch the heroes flail at these accusations. “They need to have their schedules changed in order to teach them values they lack.”

“Also check for fame and money … we don’t want *another* Captain Celebrity,” Kayama said with a huff.

“Oh really, sounds like a personal problem,” Aizawa states with a smirk. “I remember he cleaned up his act near the end.”

She simply flips him off. “Now, now, we know that’s important … but we can’t forget. All heroes are needed in this time, because we don’t have a Symbol of Peace. We have to decide whether to let students become heroes in order to avoid future risks, or reduce the number of future heroes for more focused ones.”

“Sounds like a lot of work for now. Besides, I think the heroes are up to something,” Snipe points out, gesturing with an unloaded gun to the screen.

It is true, Hizashi muses. Their patrol routes have shifted from loops to grid-patterns, and the teams shifted from capture squads to search-based ones.

They’re not doing anything more than mark places on the map and briefly check them out, but Hizashi already knows exactly why they’re doing that and what they’re going to do after.

“I think the villains may have miscalculated slightly,” sighs the villain Nedzu, picking up a pen and writing a remark down.

“Huh? Aren’t they completely prepared for an all-out assault from the heroes? Am I missing something?” asks Present Mic, while Hizashi squints at the screens to try and find out what mistake the villains could have made.

“It’s nothing obvious. It’s more of a break in mindset, produced by a few factors. I didn’t have enough information before to tell exactly, but now I know.

The villains have been basing their strategies around two concepts: ‘how villains act’ and ‘since the heroes are just us from another universe, we can predict their reactions’. They haven’t noticed how deeply the villain mindset is affecting them yet. They haven’t noticed that they can’t predict the heroes’ reactions completely anymore.

Villains can turn back and flee if things get too complicated. Heroes can’t turn back, for better or for worse. They’ve forgotten that.”

He takes a sip from his tea, slowly, his beady black eyes glinting.

“We’ll see if their plans can survive this”

“A trial?” Kayama asks, looking at the commotion going on.

“Yeah, they picked perfect targets too,” Eraserhead says as he looks at the screen. “Mineta was actually expelled in our world for harassment after some… incidents.”

“I see … I’m gonna have to have a talk with him some time,” Aizawa says with an exasperated sigh. “I was wishing that those behaviors went away on their own, but it seems not very likely at this point.”

There’s a choking sound from the back of the room, and Aizawa turns to see Vlad staring wide-eyed at the screens.

“Doesn’t that suit remind you of someone?” says Vlad, pointing at Singularity while half-heartedly trying to clean up after his spilled

drink.

It was a simple black ensemble, exactly like the rest of the 'Cleanser' villains, with the only difference being a blue visor over his eyes. His hair, formerly flat against his head, was now done up in wild spikes, the white half of his hair dyed to match the red half. Except, in the darkness, the red looked almost black.

"Actually … now that you mention it …" Eraserhead's and Aizawa's eyes widened at the same time. They realized the uncanny resemblance with the blue fire villain, Dabi.

"The villain must have left an impression on him," Yagi brought up. "It seems Dead Drop drew inspiration from one of those villains as well."

"You're correct on Dead Drop's situation," hero Nedzu remarked, leafing through a folder with the villain's costumes. "However, Singularity's situation was completely different; the black ensemble was chosen because of its versatility and stealth. The hairdo and color of the glasses was chosen with the intention of pettily insulting his father.

In other words, the resemblance is *purely* unintentional."

There is an uncomfortable silence for a second, which is broken when the heroes finally arrive to trade for Hatsume in another location.

The exchange goes well enough, not a single hitch in sight, until–

Bang!

Hatsume gets shot in the head, courtesy of her own counterpart Hacker.

"Oh, now this is just ridiculous," Snipe says, waving his hand at Hacker's grinning form as she dismantles her sniper rifle in a few seconds and retreats through a zipline, laughing like a maniac. "Why is Hacker not in the Hero Course? She's showing interest right here! Switch the paint bullets with tranquilizers and you have a damn good capture hero."

"It's a matter of the details," answers Power Loader. "What she wants to do is create gear most of the time, not fight. She doesn't care for the laws of heroism or proper rescue procedures. However, if her friends and classmates convinced her to study just enough for a provisional

license…”

Aizawa shudders, feeling bad for any villains unfortunate enough to get in her path if that happens.

“Who the hell taught them to drive?!?” shouts Kan, as the villains reveal a shiny black car and get in, almost running over the group of heroes waiting to apprehend them and speeding away, laughing with glee.

“I just loaned them the vehicle testing track. They taught themselves,” confesses Power Loader, weathering the suffering looks of the 1-B teachers.

Someone lets out a soft *shit* once Togata’s gets a section of his hair cleanly lasered off. Three guesses as to who.

“Ectoplasm, are your clones close enough to protect the students?” asks Nedzu, and Ectoplasm nods, looking slightly confused. Then, his eyes widen with understanding as Kaminari bursts from his bonds on the trial stage.

There’s a crackle of electricity as the screens following the trial light up, making a few of the teachers squint through the glare.

“Oh no,” says Toshinori, looking at the aftermath.

It was … bad. Metaphor, Pony, Double Tap were unconscious, vitals too low to continue safely. Basilisk and Crusader took a major blow, being living conductors.

Sleight was also unconscious but otherwise fine. Double Tap had flung her out of the way using a pole and his his quirk as a last ditch effort, but the impact had knocked her out.

Singularity’s entire right side was burned a bright red, Graffiti looked just as bad.

Magdalene and Dart immediately jumped down to try and help their friends, wading through the mass of charred robots.

“Metaphor, Double Tap, Chargebolt, Pony, and Grape Juice are to be escorted out of the game IMMEDIATELY,” Chiyo said through the comms. The villain Nedzu started to tell the villains that were conscious that Metaphor and Double Tap were not to be picked up, due to being out of the game.

Eraserhead and Vlad King glared down, as Aizawa stared at Kaminari and Mineta, now also looking fried.

“It seems … we need to teach restraint to the students as well,” Snipe said, watching the villains recover the best they could and escape. “I don’t think Kaminari took into account that releasing that much voltage while “injured” would have killed him too. What a pity. Even if he was injured, support from base is just as valuable as fieldwork.”

Soon after, the heroes give the okay. Plan All or Nothing goes into full effect.

“Watch closely,” Nedzu said, leaning forward in his chair. “This battle will either make or break the villain’s winning streak.

Chapter End Notes

I did not intend for the chapter to get this long. Oh well!

We both tried to use this chapter to clarify things that you guys asked about in the comments! From now on we'll try to do that every teachers react chapter!

We had this chapter ready to post since last week, and I completely forgot to post it then. Ooops?

See you guys next chapter!

What Makes a Hero?

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"We have a Hero Strikeback! I repeat, we have a Hero Strikeback! Plan Cut-Off is now in full effect!" comes Pirate Radio's voice through the comms. "Team Powerhouse, what is your status?"

Powerhouse growls from his seat in the car as it lurches, abruptly changing directions. Of course the nerd had foreseen something like this. He would have been an idiot not to after the whole stunt Singularity pulled last Civil War.

Still, what kind of bullshit plan is "cut your losses?!?"

"Hatsume is already fucking dead. You know our position, we're all combat-ready so where the fuck to now?"

"The rest of your team is going to meet up with you near the abandoned mall on the east side of the city. You'll split up to guard bases 4, 9, 17 and 21."

"Why those, though?" asks Dead Drop, slipping a pair of combat gloves on. "There's nothing important in there!"

"Yeah, but the heroes don't know that," says Pirate Radio, rock music coming softly through the line. "We're going to choose a few bases and make them *think* they're important. That way the Villain Labs and Cleanser's Base have enough time to evacuate. Try to kill a few heroes in the meantime. The spy is off-limits, pretend to fight him realistically. And also, Shishida is now a priority target."

"What about the Big Three? And Midoriya?"

"Don't worry about that." Powerhouse can hear the smug grin in Spaghetti-Ear's voice. "We already have it handled."

Kingpin leans over the edge of a skyscraper, sitting on the railing as the cool night breeze ruffles his curls.

His vantage point gives him a bird's eye view of the city below, his mask giving him both night and heat vision. Nothing can hide from him now, not even the hero team below trying to sneak into one of the burner bases they set up the first day.

They won't find much there. A futon, snacks, a spare gun perhaps. Those things don't matter in the long run.

What *does* matter is that this hero team has both Nejire and Midoriya in it. An opportunity to eliminate those two particular players is too valuable to pass up.

"Kingpin to base," he radioed in, while fiddling with a switch. "How is the negotiation moving along?"

"Pretty well, all things considered," answers Pirate Radio, the clacking of keys coming through the line. "The negotiation-bot is cooperative. That little stunt Kaminari pulled ended up tipping things in our favor."

"Good. Is the Nejire-neutralization team in position?" He taps his finger on the switch to the beat of his heart.

"Affirmative."

"It's showtime, then." Kingpin breathes in, securing his mask on his face. It's a different one, this time, made to look more traditionally villainous: a smooth black surface, only accentuated by a sculpted mass of fangs.

Kingpin activates his quirk, smiling as his sparks of lighting tinge his surroundings a soft green. He taps the side of his mask, the top part retreating to let his eyes be seen. His hair's been dyed white temporarily, and his curls tamed and slicked back. His mind is running a mile a minute, but his pulse is steady in his ears. A small, sharp smile etches itself into his face, under his mask.

He flips the switch.

Below him, bombs filled with Midnight's sleeping gas, tear gas and smoke all burst, blanketing the heroes in a suffocating, hazardous darkness even thicker than the night surrounding them.

A screeching roar tears through the silence of the night and screams

break out inside the black cloud, Dark Shadow's claws briefly peeking out of it.

Blue lights up the night, Hado using her quirk to blow the smoke away.

The smoke suddenly comes to life, bending itself to swallow the heroes again. Kingpin notices Blackout's grinning face melded into the black cloud as he shows off, making the smoke bend to his will using his quirk.

Nightmare takes aim with his handgun, letting his infrared vision pinpoint where Nejire is through all the smoke. He shoots.

Kingpin's eyebrows raise as she creates a wave of energy in time to deflect the bullet and send it careening towards him.

Nightmare jumps to the side and looks back to see cracked pavement where he was just seconds before. A slight flash of red light comes through the darkness as his support gear does its job, and prevents Dark Shadow from going on a rampage.

A goo bomb flies through the darkness as if thrown by intangible hands. That tells Kingpin Lift is making her entrance, telekinetically taking advantage of the dark. He hears the bomb go off.

A break in the smoke lets him see Tsunotori's left leg dripping with red goo from the knee down. Ashido rushes over to her and picks her up, trying to get her out of the danger.

Lift takes aim and shoots Ashido in the back.

A spark of green at the edge of Kingpin's vision is all the warning he gets before Midoriya kicks him off the building.

With the wind whistling in his ears, Kingpin corrects his trajectory mid-air and crashes through a department store, tearing off several racks of clothes before skidding to a stop.

He sighs, pulling himself to his feet, shaking his head to stop the ringing in his ears. He knew his counterpart, Deku, had more power at his fingertips… but there was no *finesse.* His kick had sent him flying, but had hardly even made a dent in his armor.

Looking up, he saw the glowing form of Deku as he crashed through the storefront Kingpin had been thrown through.

Kingpin spoke up as the hero stepped through the destroyed wall. “Rude, I was just watching how things went down. And a surprise attack? I’m impressed, didn’t think that would be your play.”

“How could you…” Izuku growled, stepping forwards, shouldering a half-destroyed rack of clothes from his path.

Kingpin tilted his head, adjusting his fedora, still remarkably attached, even as he began to pace to the side, keeping Deku in his sights. “I’m afraid I don’t kn–”

“You don’t know?!? *You forced Crusade* into witnessing an execution almost identical to that of his brother! *You made Hacker torture Hatsume* live on video. *You tricked heroes* into killing one of their own!” Izuku shoved another rack out of his way, also beginning to circle the villain of the duo.

A laugh escapes Kingpin’s throat.

“You think *I* was the one that ordered them to do those things?”

Deku pauses, his eyes narrowing.

“All I did was give them the opportunity to let their dark sides come out to play. They did that on their own.” Kingpin lets his amusement bleed through his masks’ voice modifier. “But the fact that you think I could do that in the first place tells me something much more interesting.”

Kingpin’s mask closes completely, hiding his eyes from view.

“You’ve realized our true potential for villainy, haven’t you?”

Deku flinches, lashing out with a punch that Kingpin easily sidesteps.

“Stop that! You’re turning your back to our ideal! We were supposed to be the hero who’s smile made people feel safe!” Deku screams, picking up a rack and throwing it with all his strength at Kingpin.

“And I will be,” Kingpin cut in, loosening the buttons of his suit jacket. “But not alone.”

“*… what?”*

“You don’t get it, because you didn’t see what happened. What I did.” Kingpin tossed his jacket away, rolling up the sleeves of his black button-up, revealing slim, form-fitting armor that braced his arms and

wrists. “We can’t be the Symbol of Peace.”

Kingpin glanced off towards the rising pillar of smoke, Hado still fighting against the Ghoul Trio, keeping Deku in his sight even as he let himself focus on something else. “One Symbol of Peace, one hero with a smile isn’t enough. It wasn’t enough when things went wrong. It wasn’t enough to stop the threat of the League, to stop All Might from tearing himself apart in the name of justice, to prevent the devastation at Kamino…”

Turning back, their eyes met, Kingpin and Deku.

The heroic ruler and the kind smile. Two sides of a coin, each etched with their own story.

“ In my world… Bakugou wasn’t the only one the villains were after. ” His hands, wreathed and shrouded with the sparks of green energy that both heroes possessed, began to change, thin, drifting black whispers trailing as Kingpin flexed and moved.

Izuku’s eyes widened, guard raised and tightening to receive an attack, but Kingpin continued, ever slowly widening the gap between the two with more and more dark tendrils sprouting from his hands.

“All for One wanted me as well.”

Izuku’s limbs turn to lead.

He’s frozen as Kingpin’s words resonate through his mind. He can’t believe it. The *monster* that hurt All Might so much, that ended up making him stop being a Pro Hero… thinking *he* could be a *villain?*

No.

Impossible.

Kingpin raises his hands, the black tendrils in them smashing the lightbulbs in the room with ease.

“You’re lying.”

“We both know we’re awful liars.”

Black tendrils come for Izuku and he jumps over them, pushing off against a wall to get out of the danger zone. The tendrils change directions and he gets cuts all over his legs from them. They blend in

with the darkness of early morning.

“Who did All for One steal that quirk from?” slips out of Izuku’s mouth, before he’s forced to duck under a punch.

“Who said All for One gave me this quirk?”

Deku blinks in confusion for a second, before leaping away as a Full Cowl-augmented kick comes his way. He hides behind the cashier’s counter, knowing that they’re always steel-reinforced in case of villain attack–

Kingpin’s kick bores a hole through the steel. A 3% Full Cowl kick should have trouble breaking *stone*.

Izuku jumps straight up, avoiding the black vines that shoot out of Kingpin’s foot.

“You’re probably wondering how I managed to break through steel, right?”

Izuku grits his teeth, somersaulting over Kingpin and running deeper into the store.

“Basic physics, really. The same amount of force concentrated on a smaller area will yield more pressure. A 3% kick done with precision will be ten times more devastating than a 5% one done badly.”

This isn’t working. Izuku glances around for an exit to get back to Nejire-senpai. He can’t beat Kingpin on his own and he’s not going to lose here.

“Besides, I *am* using 5% of One for All–”

Izuku throws a chair at where Kingpin’s robotic-sounding voice is coming from. It clatters harmlessly to the floor.

“–just not for *strength* . We did theorise about this before, page 34 of notebook 12, ‘Speculations on the origins of All Might’s reflexes,’ I believe.”

Click.

“And if you so much as twitch I’ll prove to you how those reflexes make for great aim.”

The barrel of the gun is cold against Izuku’s neck. He doesn’t dare

speak, or move or even breathe.

Izuku knew of an opportunity when he saw one. He called on One for All and grit his teeth, wrestling it out of his muscles, willing it to stretch and surface.

He flicked his finger, a blast of air sending Kingpin's shot flying wide and the gun careening out of his hand.

Izuku whirled around and built up a punch, gritting his teeth at the slowness of it. Still, the blast of air that came from his hand was enough to make up for the time spent building it up.

Kingpin easily blocks the punch with his gauntlet.

Well, he learned that move in a rush and he doesn't have a gun to his neck so that's a win for him.

"'Speculations of All Might's resistance to large damage', page 24 on notebook 8. Just pour some of One For All into your skin and you can still do wind pressure attacks without hurting yourself," says Izuku, grinning, before jumping away.

Kingpin stood up and dusted himself off. "But setting up the move takes so long you become like a tank." He stares at Izuku. "Aren't we more suited for speed?"

Kingpin whipped his hand around and shot at him point-blank. "Such wasted potential."

Izuku jumped, but got his arm scraped by the moving projectile. "It doesn't matter what we're suited or have potential for!" He moved close, leaning back from a punch Kingpin threw. "It only matters that you give it your all!" He charged his legs with high amounts of power, kicking the villain in the side, missing him but shattering the windows of the store.

A scoff came from his opponent. "Oh, save me that *idiotic* propaganda catchphrase. We followed that advice, and where did that get us? A hair's breadth away from not being able to use our arms anymore."

Izuku grits his teeth at the reminder, becoming conscious of the growing ache in his arms.

"Regardless of that, this fight has taken long enough. I thank you for your time."

“What–”

Kingpin acts before Izuku can process it, sending him flying out the window towards the street below. On instinct, he uses One for All to resist the damage. The impact still knocks the air out his lungs and leaves him gasping, curled on a side.

He faintly registers Kingpin’s graceful landing. Disoriented as he is, he doesn’t recognize Kingpin for a second. He only sees a masked, white-haired villain, leisurely strolling up to him and planting a foot in his chest.

“A word of advice before I kill you. Stop trying to be *the* Symbol of Peace. *Stop trying to be All Might.* ”

“But the–” Izuku coughs as the pressure on his chest gets stronger. “The hero system relies on a Symbol of Peace to work.”

“Then remake the system. If it’s broken, *fix it* . You can’t just continue like things are and keep yourself in a false sense of security. It’ll only hurt *everyone* in the end.”

Izuku wonders if he knows how close he’s to paraphrasing the Hero Killer’s words.

“But All Might’s legacy–”

“Ended up being ‘smile through the pain while you live on borrowed time!’”

“...what?”

Kingpin pauses, the electronic eyes of the mask looking down to Izuku like a pair of radioactive suns.

“Don’t– don’t tell me you don’t know.”

Izuku doesn’t answer. There’s an epiphany waiting to happen in his mind. He doesn’t want to know it. He *doesn’t want to*–

“He’s dying. All Might is dying,” states Kingpin.

“STOP LYING.”

Izuku doesn’t know where this fury comes from, but it still tears a scream off of his throat. He has to stop Kingpin, no matter the cost. He can’t just– he can’t–

“I’m not giving up on All Might, or his legacy or heroics! I’m not–”

Pain.

It bursts, rips out of him, ripples throughout his body makes him thrash.

Kingpin jumps away from him, and Izuku opens his eyes.

There’s black tendrils coming out of *Izuku’s* arm, small and wild compared to those of Kingpin, but still *there* and what is *happening* –

Another wave of pain crashes through him and a tendril bursts from his arm, flying through the air at Kingpin.

The villain raises his arm to block and catches the tendril with his arm, but the tendril wraps around his uncovered forearm–

“A symbol?” A woman asked, a tall one in a hero costume.

“A Symbol of Peace …” He said, but it wasn’t his voice. Why was his voice wrong? *“The reason crime in this country isn’t decreasing … is that the citizens have no support … They have no pillar they can rely on. That’s why I will become that pillar.”* What is he talking about and why does this voice feel familiar?

The woman looked at him. “Is that why you want to be a hero? Even though your quirkless?”

“Yes.”

Even if it wasn’t him talking, it would have been the same answer. The woman laughed, and he felt something. Peace?

“Toshinori Yagi … right?” … What? *“You’re really funny.” He saw blond hair in his face.* Am I Al–

Izuku comes back to. The cool night air buffets his face, and he realizes he’s high up in the sky, being carried away by a pair of arms.

“Are you okay? We found you passed out and Kingpin was pointing a gun at you. Isn’t that scary? What was with the cool black thing though?” Nejire asks as she unleashes another wave of energy to keep herself airborne. “You seemed super confused before you blacked out. Is it a support item?”

Oh god he was close to a girl. So, so, so *close* . His face was beginning

to heat up, and he instinctively tried to cover his face but he grit his teeth and winced through the pain after he tried raising his arms.

The pain gives him a second of clarity.

“Where’s Kingpin!?!” Izuku blurts out, wide-eyed.

“Don’t worry, someone is on the case!” Nejire smiles, landing on the roof of the Hero Base. “ *You* need to rest though. We’ll need your help to go over everything we found in the villain bases! So go to the infirmary and rest, ok?”

He nods as his feet touch the ground. He only walks two steps forward before his knees give up on him.

“Do you want help?” Nejire asks, and Izuku’s throat knots itself closed, tears stinging at his eyes. He nods.

As he leans on Nejire, a fog slips into his mind.

He thought… he thought he could beat Kingpin and prove that being heroic was better than being villainous...

He really was useless back there, wasn’t he?

And if he was so much stronger as a villain…

Did he deserve One for All in the first place?

Con Man watches the fight from the shadows, finger tapping a rhythm on his gun, waiting for the right moment to make an opening for Kingpin to retreat to.

He sees why Suneater's part of the Big Three now. How are you supposed to punch something made of *rubber* ? And that’s not to mention the diamond-like crystals he has on his fingers.

Dead Drop, The Sparkle and Hold Up are keeping him busy, but they’re not part of the squad specifically designed to counter him. It’s fine. They don’t need to kill him, only distract him for long enough for Kingpin to get away, now that he’s done with his mission.

The Ghoul Trio has already safely reatreated, tired from their fight against Nejire. Parasite is bound to arrive sooner or later, Kingpin’s

tired but he can still shoot and Con Man himself has a few tricks up his sleeve. They'll be fine.

"Crusade speaking," crackles through Con Man's comm. "The Cleanser's Base has fully been evacuated, the Villain Labs as well. Shishida's been eliminated.The mission's a success. Should I activate the traps on all other remaining bases?"

"Sure. Let's give those heroic bastards a surprise."

"Con Man, please refrain from using crude language."

"Uh–"

"This is Magdalene speaking!" snaps through the line. "Nejire has dropped Deku off and is heading back to the fight with reinforcements! ETA 2 minutes!"

They hadn't accounted for that. Why would the heroes continue the fight if it was already made clear they were outmatched?!?

They need to leave NOW.

Con Man plunges his hand into one of the million folds of his hero costume and pulls out a red goo grenade. He soundlessly moves closer to the fight, Dead Drop commanding floating knife after floating knife to stab at Suneater's face, regardless of the cuts on her body bleeding all over her costume.

He waits, watching as Hold Up and a panting Kingpin fire round after round at Suneater, and him using his quirk to dodge them or stop the paint bullets from reaching him.

The Sparkle lets loose a blinding flash of light inches from Suneater's face.

Con Man throws the grenade.

He notices too late that Suneater grew another pair of eyes right in the middle of his chest after he was blinded.

He uses his rubber arms almost like a slingshot, throwing the grenade straight back at Kingpin.

Con Man's legs move without him ordering them to.

He sees Kingpin kicking the grenade back at Suneater.

He sees Dead Drop and The Sparkle taking cover behind the wall of a nearby cafe.

He sees Hold Up's eyes widen, realizing what is going to happen.

He knows that the grenade he used was one of the strong ones. It doesn't matter that Sleight and Kingpin are somewhat far away. They won't be able to survive this if they don't have cover.

He'll just have to make the cover himself.

"CON MAN NO!"

He smiles softly as he steps in between the grenade and Kingpin. He trusts Hold Up is holding Kingpin back, pulling them away from the blast radius.

Suneater's eyes widen as he tries to cover himself up with seashells. It's too late.

With a bang, Con Man feels as the cold red goo covers his arms, legs, torso, everything.

Before the goo hardens, Con Man slips off his mask letting his eyes see with the faint light of the rising dawn.

Suneater is also covered in red. He looks as if he's about to cry.

Con Man turns around, watching is Kingpin looks at him disbelievingly. He's completely clean, not even a speck of red on him. Hold Up only has a few bits of color on his hand.

Good.

"Sorry, Kingpin. Please, listen to the other villains while I'm gone, okay?"

He nods imperceptibly, tears glistening in his eyes.

"Con Man, please wait for Ectoplasm's clones to retrieve you," comes Aizawa-sensei's voice through his comm.

He watches the sky go from the purple of night to the pink of dawn as the red goo hardens.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter thoroughly kicked my ass. Just sayin'.
Really, it was such a tough decision as to who died and who lived, but I'm pretty satisfied with my decision in the end.

Also rip Suneater, you will be remembered. Rip Con Man, you will be *very* missed.

Rip Kingpin's sanity and Deku's self-esteem.

Things can only go downhill from here.

Snake in the Grass

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/edit?usp=sharing

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Mirio watches as the remaining members of the hero team enter HQ.

The lines of their backs and shoulders are bent, drooping. Whispers, angry whispers, sad whispers, scared whispers, float up from the heroes as they let their own tiredness drag them into the chairs and collapse.

There's a moment as Mirio does a headcount. Twenty four active heroes, two injured and four still in trial. They're getting dangerously close to having only half of the heroes they started with.

Mirio wants to go up to the front, to flash a smile and pick their morale up from where it is on the floor, but he can't. This isn't his war to fight. They'll have to learn how to deal with hopeless situations sooner or later, and for his kouhais' sake, Mirio hopes it's sooner.

"We failed …" says Kendo sullenly, and no one looked like arguing. "We did the unexpected yet we only got *one* villain out of the game with our plan…"

"And we lost Suneater," states Bondo, unintentionally driving the morale even lower.

Mirio winces. He knows Suneater, inside and out, and he *knows* that he's going to be tearing himself apart right at this moment. 'If First Years can beat me, then how can I call myself a hero?', played in his head over and over again. It hurts Mirio to think about and he wants so badly to go comfort him, but he knows that if he forfeited his place in the War to talk to him, Tamaki would spiral even deeper.

Nejire lightly squeezes Mirio's arm, bringing him out of his worried musings. She has a soft smile on her face, and it reminds Mirio that this is just a game, after all. There's nothing to be worried about.

“What can we do?” asks Uraraka, trying to put on a brave face. Her smile comes out wobbly.

“ *What can we dooo?* ” mocks Monoma, scoffing, and stands up to the front of the auditorium. “I don’t know if all of you have noticed, but we’re losing! Our reputation is a sinking ship, the villains have wreaked havoc everywhere, and Plan All or Nothing got us *one* villain eliminated. One!”

He stops to take a breath, composes himself and folds his hands behind his back.

“I think the only option we have right now is to play it safe. Last as much as we can until the last day, and then go out to wreck the villains with the Superweapon.”

Mirio had forgotten the Superweapon was something they could use. Now that he’s thinking about it though… such a weapon is the perfect way to make sure the heroes have a motivation for keeping the game going despite losing badly. He has the inkling Nedzu put that there because he knew the heroes were going to get steamrolled, and he needed *something* to motivate them to keep the game going and not just throw the towel.

“We don’t even know what the Superweapon is! It would be too much of a gamble to rely only on it,” chastises Iida, tapping a pen on the clipboard in his hands. “And besides, we don’t know if the villains have the password or not. We could withstand the whole day only to get crushed at the last minute because of that!”

“But what do you want us to do then?!? I didn’t hear you propose anything, just criticize everything I say!” snaps back Monoma, his hands tightening at his sides. “The only other option we have is giving up and *that’s* looking more like the better choice by the second!”

There are murmurs of assent in the crowd.

Mirio sighs and gets ready to break up a fight. He really appreciates their energy, but this is not the time–

“SHUT THE HELL UP YOU FUCKING IDIOTS!”

Everybody in the auditorium jumped, including Mirio himself. He turned around to see Bakugou stomping down to the front of the auditorium. Iida shouts “Language!” and Monoma shoots him a dirty look, he ignores both of them and turns to the rest of the heroes.

“Are all of you so moronic to forget why the fuck we’re here?!? We’re here to be *heroes* , you think a *real* hero gets all prissy and weepy when they’re losing?!? Hell, no! If they lose all their limbs, they fight with their fucking *teeth* . Until the teachers say we lose, we don’t EVER consider giving up!

We’re heroes! We don’t die! WE TELL THEM TO DIE! NOW SAY IT WITH ME**, PLUS ULTRA!**”

“PLUS ULTRA!”

The heroes cheer along, their voices rising as one like battle cries.

Mirio raises an eyebrow at the unexpected source of a moral boost. Still, what works, works.

“We still haven’t decided what to do though,” points out Jiro, her earphone jacks pointing at the Paragons.

“I... might have a few ideas…” trails off Midoriya, fidgeting with his hands.

“We’d love to hear them Midoriya,” answers Kendo, smiling tiredly at him.

“Well, uh, we should get access to Con Man’s file since he’s, um, a confirmed criminal even if he’s “dead”. We could use that to get confirmation that there’s a villain with a mind control quirk and also use his body type and measures to identify him in the recordings of Koda’s murder to maybe get a lighter sentence for the team that accidentally killed him and fix our reputation. And, uh, I’m pretty sure Dead Drop was bleeding back at the fight with Suneater and if we could get some of her blood we could link her and Singularity’s group of villains so their reputation goes down and we should probably re-assign patrol routes now that we’re so few and–”

At that point Midoriya’s voice becomes a murmur and he starts muttering, so Mirio can’t even understand what he’s saying.

“Those are wonderful ideas Midoriya!” praises Iida, adjusting his glasses while puffing his chest up. “Are there any volunteers to help carry them out–”

“I wanted to do them myself…” says Midoriya, at first confident, then losing volume half-way and sputtering off.

“Huh, but aren’t you a front-line fighter?” asks Tetsutetsu, scratching his head. “This just looks like a bunch of paperwork.”

“Well, yes but the truth is–” Midoriya cuts himself off, taking a deep breath before continuing. “There’s something wrong with my quirk. It just, got out of control back in my fight with Kingpin and I… I can’t let myself become a liability. I don’t think I should go back in the frontlines until I figure out what’s wrong with it.”

“Oh really? Aren’t you just using this as an excuse to slack off? It wouldn’t surprise me coming from 1-A–”

“Shut up Monoma!” chastises Kendo, throwing a pen with accuracy that has Mirio’s eyebrows climbing his forehead.

“Anyways, we shouldn’t expose you to undue damage. If you want to stay at HQ and help there, you are welcome Midoriya.”

He smiles, a tremulous, hesitant that has a smidge of determination shines through.

Mirio decides in that moment that Midoriya is definitely worth the hero title. Who else could still smile and try their best after being shown just how villainous they can be, but a true hero?

Dead Drop wants to cry. It always happens to her, wanting to cry out of frustration, and right now she’s *very* frustrated!

Three villains lost! That’s so infuriating!

“Urgh! Who else wants to punch a wall?” she says, stomping her foot on the ground.

“I don’t want to punch a wall, I want to punch a hero!” growls Overdose, still coming down from a sugar-high.

“I want to slit their throats! How dare that electric idiot take out *two* people from 1-B!” says Larceny, playing with a knife he created using Forgery’s quirk.

Forgery herself is making caltrops without noticing, which is how Dead Drop knows she’s just as mad as she is.

“We can discuss this matter further once we’ve organized everything,”

says Crusade, ushering them all inside the base. He has to speak louder as the sounds and shouts from outside are quick to drown out almost everything. Still, the music outside is pretty catchy!

The villains as a whole enter the “auditorium” they chose, with its colorful fabric walls and ceiling, the circular benches all looking down at the arena. Employees bustle around double-checking and cleaning things for the 8 am show, but as soon as the villains start to come in, Kingpin does a hand sign and all of the employees file out quietly and quickly, leaving the place theirs to use.

It takes only a few seconds for the villains to get in and choose their seat, leaning on each other through the tiredness. Dead Drop feels like she could fall asleep leaning on Crusade’s shoulder, but Kingpin is waiting at the center of the arena, standing on a ringmaster’s podium.

Little by little the noise quiets down. All eyes are on Kingpin.

Dead Drop notices how he’s cradling one of his arms to his chest, his face gritted. His fedora is crumpled in his other hand. She thinks she can see tear drops at the edges of his eyes and she knows they’re pretty similar in that aspect: he’s frustrated, so he’s near crying too.

He opens his mouth once, pauses to swallow and says:

“They won’t get away with this.”

His eyes raise and Dead Drop gets to see his eyes glowing a radioactive green, sparks and brief flashes of red flitting around them.

“WE WILL NOT LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THIS!”

Dead Drop cheers, a chorus of shouts rising up around her like a tidal wave. She stands up with energy she didn't know she had.

"They think they've gotten one up over us. We'll show them how wrong they are!" He shouts, and there's a challenge in his eyes, his shoulders squared. "We'll make them see how naïve they've been!"

The arena explodes with shouts.

"Crush the heroes!"

"Make them pay!"

"We'll kill them all!”

She screams her frustration into the air, watching as it becomes bloodlust as it joins the shouts of the other villains.

Dead Drop's throat is raw and aching, her limbs scream with tiredness, she doesn't care. She doesn't care at all. She knows, with her friends and classmates alongside her, there is nothing that stands in their way.

"All of you, to your stations!" Forgery says, going down the podium to stand beside Kingpin. She puts an arm around his shoulders. "We're regrouping and planning, so think up a few things we could do, we're discussing them here after the show!"

That's the cue for all of them to go. They walk out, picking up the pieces of trash along the way. They did cut into the employees' time for preparation, helping them out is the least thing they can do!

Besides, Dead Drop has an idea forming in her head, and the repetitive motions of picking up candy wrappers let her mind start to form connections. As soon as she's done, she runs towards Kingpin, who's leaving through the entrance.

"Dek– Ooops, Kingpin! Kingpin! I have an idea–"

"–Should give them a push, a goal to strive for. Leaving so much frustration unattended would have boiled over eventually. This could push them deeper into mindset–"

"Kingpin? Hello?"

"–But that's an acceptable risk to take. Anyways, I should keep the negotiation-bot in mind in our next actions. We're *so close* to getting his trust fully–"

"Are you on a mutter-rant?"

"–and any other plans that would affect that are not ideal. If everything goes to plan, we'll have the second and third part of the password by the end of today and the fourth tomorrow morning so Condense can get the location from the heroes and–"

"KINGPIN!"

"WhaAA," he yelps, tripping on his own feet and slamming his elbow into a nearby metal pole by accident.

“Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry Kingpin! Are you okay? You didn’t hit your bad arm did you?!?” Dead Drop sprints to his side, worriedly looking him over.

“I’m fine,” he says, but he sways a bit in place and that’s fishy.

“Nope! You’re not! You’re going to the infirmary right now!” she says and taps him with her quirk, and waits for him to rise into the air. “And you’re getting rest afterwards no ifs and buts about it!” she says, and grips him by the foot, walking to the infirmary with Kingpin floating above her like a life-sized balloon.

“Ab– are– what– Are you serious?” he fumbles, watching her with wide eyes.

“Yep!” Dead Drop says without a drop of remorse.

There’s a second as they both stared at each other, and random bots pass beside them, giving them weird looks. Then Dead Drop giggles and the corner on Kingpin’s mouth ticks up and she snorts and they both end up laughing like idiots.

“Lead the way then!” he manages to say through a fit of giggles, and Dead Drop does. It’s kind of difficult to walk in a straight line when you’re in a fit of post-adrenaline laughter, but she manages to get there with minimal scrapes and/or nausea. Point for her!

On her way, she sees Powerhouse staring at the floating, laughing Kingpin. All she does is flip the bird at him, but he doesn’t seem to react at all. Huh, strange. Moving on then.

“Did you manage to hurt yourself again?” asks Savage, looking at the Kingpin balloon and sighing.

Dead Drop doesn’t envy him: getting the infirmary turn right after a big battle is always the worst.

“I’m fine, it’s just a bruised arm–”

“Just bruised my ass,” he grumbles, lowering Kingpin onto the bed gently and gestures for Dead Drop to cancel her quirk. He goes to work immediately, while Dead Drop takes the chance and starts applying disinfectant on the cuts she has *everywhere* from fighting Suneater. They’re not deep, but they sting. That sucks.

“Oh, yeah! I wanted to tell you something Kingpin!” remembers Dead

Drop, setting the gauze aside for a moment.

“Do you have a plan?” he asks, looking at her with an excited smile on his face.

“Oh, this ought to be good,” says Savage, finishing up with the healing salve on Kingpin’s arm.

“You know, Condense has been in position for a while now. Shishida is gone, meaning he can’t sniff around anymore. I know the plan was to eliminate Mirio in *that* way, but… you’re thinking a bit too small.

If it would work on one of the Big Three, wouldn’t it work on a few other heroes as well?”

Savage is silently grinning as he begins clapping.

Kingpin has his phone out already. “I’ll contact Extortion first, she’s the one most likely to pass on the change of plans to Condense through the articles she’s writing. I’m only worried that it would reveal our traitor a bit too soon– scratch that. Revealing they have a traitor in their midst would be the *perfect* way to distract them all. It’s–”

Dead Drop smiles at Kingpin’s rant and she knows that in a few hours there’ll be a handful of more plans to review. Still, a yawn rises out of Dead Drop’s throat without her permission and that tells her she has to cut things a bit short.

“Well, I’m tired. I’m going to bed. See you guys later!”

Extortion’s phone chirps with a new message, but she doesn’t pay it any attention to it, at least not yet.

“Message from your boss?” asks the Major, a robot with a monocle and a goofy sash proudly declaring “Major”. They serve another cup of “wine” to Extortion, the third one already.

“Yes,” Extortion answers truthfully, only because the Major doesn't know she has two bosses. “I’m thinking the company is beginning to catch on why I ask for so many interviews with you.” She smiles, her eyes half-lidded as she takes the cup and drinks from it, not breaking eye contact.

“It would be a shame they’d stop letting you come here, wouldn’t it?” they respond, scooting a bit closer to Extortion and slinging an arm on her shoulders.

“Oh, they know they can’t do that. I’m their most successful writer, they wouldn’t want to risk losing me.”

The Major laughs, picking their own cup of wine. “A toast to that!”

Extortion smiles and raises her cup.

“Oh, and by the way, I have a few things to offer you,” she says, setting her cup down and laying her head on their shoulder.

“Like what?” they ask. Their arm goes from her shoulder to her waist.

“Ten million yen in exchange for access to the government intranet.”

Extortion smiles as the Major startles, turning to look at her fully.

“That is not much money in exchange for what you’re asking of me,” they say, their robotic eyes lighting up a soft orange to express their hesitancy.

“Well… would you rather I pay for that by not saying a thing about your tax evasion?” Extortion said, looking at her nails while the Major jumps beside her. “I’m planning to use that little tidbit of information to get something else though.”

The Major opened their mouth to protest, but Extortion was quick to silence them by placing a finger on their robotic lips. “Oh, I’m not telling you until *after* you agree to my deal.”

“What are you going to use the access to the intranet for?” they asked, folding their hands in front of them.

“To look at hero records, of course” *Not.* “If I know which heroes are the guilty ones, I can acquire my proof of their crimes through other methods and *voilà!* Next front-page article secured,” she says, and waits until she hears the Major’s delighted laugh.

“Only you would go so far for an article,” they say, settling back onto the seat. “Very well, but when will you uphold your part of the deal?”

“That’s what my silence is going to buy,” Extortion said, gently caressing the Major’s neck. “In exchange for my silence, I ask for a date to the Amusement Park tonight at five. I’ll be there with the

money. What do you say?”

The Major holds her hand and “kisses” it, which is mostly just letting the robot’s sculpted mouth press against her hand. “I would love to.”

Just on cue, Extortion’s phone begins vibrating with the fake call she scheduled on it. She sighs, grumbling as she taps the answer button.

“Hello?... Yes, I know. I’ll be there right away... No, I’m not– That was today?... Are you sure? Alright, goodbye then.” Extortion taps to end the call, and stands from the couch. “Duty calls. See you at seven?”

“Of course. See you then,” they say and stand up, picking up their jacket and donning it, regaining their “trustworthy and reliable” persona.

Extortion rushedly says her goodbye to keep the lie credible and opens her phone to look at the message from Kingpin… and apparently Dead Drop too.

Her eyebrows raise as she reads the plan Dead Drop thought of, calculating in how much time she could pass on the message. Not much, if she’s being honest. There are a few deadlines breathing down her neck that she has to attend to, and if she just happens to slip a codified message in her next article? Well, nobody would know, except for the recipient.

Extortion smiles and sends a quick text back to Dead Drop: *Girl, I like how you think ;)*.

She pockets her phone and smirks.

Ah, what a good day to be a villain.

Chapter End Notes

> This chapter's a lot quieter than those before, but we sneaked a lot of foreshadowing inside of it, so enjoy!
>
> Chapter 22 is already 80% written by the time I post this and boy oh boy it's going to be great!
>
> I can't wait for all you guys' reactions of it!

Breaking Point

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tokage sits staring at the police officer, watching as she checks over the evidence they presented.

DNA test results, images of footage, even testimonies of civil-bots litter the worn table.

Tokage holds her breath, hoping with all her might that the officer accepts it because she doesn't know what they could do if the evidence is rejected.

If that happened, it would be better to just cut their losses and quit the game.

She hears a creak outside the door and tenses, instinctively switching her attention to her floating eye near the door. It's just Nejire-senpai's horns accidentally knocking on the windowsill. There's nothing to worry about. Nothing at all!

"This certainly is something," says the officer, reaching for her "cigarette" on the table with a mechanical hand. "If this, Cleanser, Bombing Armada, unknown villain group alliance exists, then it might explain a lot of the odd things happening around lately."

Tokage doesn't dare let go of the breath she's holding in. She needs to appear unruffled, unaffected. With their reputation on the floor, the heroes need all the allies they can get and looking unprofessional is not going to convince the police to be on their side.

"The Police Force thanks you for your work," says the police officer, collecting all the papers in a neat pile. "I'll make this known to my superiors."

Tokage bows deeply and heads out the door, opening it to find Nejire looking at her, bouncing in place.

"How did it go?!?" she asks, her blue hair bouncing with her all over the place.

She doesn't trust her throat right now, so Tokage nods, relief painting itself all over her face.

Nejire quietly cheers, and starts asking "Is it working, is it working?" through the comms.

"Our reputation is going up. A few more hours and we'll be back above 50%" answers Shoji, a smile coming through his voice. "Get back to base, the reboot is going to begin soon."

Tokage looks at Nejire. Both of them nod in unison and pick their pace up. None of them want to get stuck outside base while the entire hero system is rebooting. The whole thing is going to leave them in the dark for a few hours, but it's the only way to flush the villains' influence from the computers.

"So what's the plan?" Tokage asks.

"There's not much we can do during the reboot," answers Nejire, a few paces ahead of her. "Without comms or computers or even telephone lines, isn't it very difficult to go out heroing? So we're calling a strategy meeting."

Tokage sighs.

The work left to do is *endless* .

"Are you ready for the ride?" says Extortion, using the most sophisticated tone she can, despite the fact she has a wad of cotton candy twice the size of her head in her hand and an eye-sore of a sun hat, courtesy of the theme park.

The Major doesn't seem to care, trailing behind her with a satisfied smile on their face.

Extortion clamps down on her urge to shove them into the fake iron maiden open beside them. Instead, she stretches her back, feigning exhaustion.

"Tired? Would you like for me to carry your bag?" says the Major, a greedy gleam in their eyes.

That's the first part of the password Extortion had made for the exchange of money. Better to disguise the deal in something utterly

mundane than organizing something so ridiculous as an elaborate drop-off of a briefcase.

“Please do. And check that everything is still there. Rumors of thieves in this theme park are far too common for my liking,” Extortion responds, shrugging off the bag.

While the Major opens it and begins quickly counting the stacks of money, she adjusts the grey, stylish trenchcoat and business pants she’s wearing to cover up the outfit underneath. Nothing seems to be out of place, as they finish checking the money and instead lace their hand with Extortion’s.

“I believe you left this at my place,” they say, reaching into the folds of their pocket to retrieve a what looks to be a PDA.

The Major’s lie is well said, well practiced, and Extortion internally sneers at the quantity of under-the-table deals they must have done in order for it to come naturally. She can’t believe she ever thought the government cared for the interests of their citizens.

Still, she takes the device, pressing a few buttons to bring up the database she needs. It’s the work of a few seconds to log into the “research” records, pulling up the string of letters and numbers that makes up part two out of four for the Superweapon’s password.

The smile she directs at the Major is genuine, for once.

“Are we going to be bothered by your work any time soon?” asks Extortion, a giggle slipping from her mouth. ‘ *Do your bodyguards know where you are right now or who you’re with?’* she doesn’t say.

“Oh, don’t worry. I cleared my schedule just for you.” The Major responds with a teasing, flirtatious tone. *‘I’ve given them orders to leave me alone until well into tomorrow morning if you decide you want to do something tonight,’* is what they don’t say.

“Perfect.”

“Welcome to the House of Terror!” drawls one of the employees, dressed as if she’d narrowly escaped a car crash on her way to work, glass sticking out at odd angles and fake dried blood staining the park uniform. “Enter if you dare!”

There’s a split-second as the employee realizes who exactly Extortion is. She steps back, letting Extorsion pass without complaint as she

reaches behind her for the walkie-talkie on her belt.

With a smile, Extortion increases her pace, the Major trying and failing to go after her. She starts sprinting, huffing giggles under her breath, as she ventures deeper into the House of Terror, conspicuously devoid of any actors in costume trying to scare them.

The laughter that has been threatening to escape her mouth bursts forth as she reaches for a hidden spool of garrote wire in her pocket.

“I’ve been dying to do this for *days* ,” Extortion says turning to see the surprised face of the Major. “Goodbye, you *disgrace* .”

She commands her hands to detach from her body, the silver of the thin metal glinting in the fake lighting of the haunted house. They fly to the Major, dancing around their neck, and as they begin to scream, the wire is pulled tight.

The decapitated robot head of the Major hits the ground, fake blood spurting from the clean cut.

There’s a moment of silence as Extortion breathes in, the red on the ground drying ever so slightly. Her hands shake, still holding the wire.

“Whooo, boy that was great!” says Drug-runner from behind her, an empty vat floating after her. “Did you see their face?!? ‘WAAA, DON’T KILL MEEEEEEE.’ That’s hilarious!”

Extortion laughs, but it’s shaky, wobbly, all of her is wobbly, she falls to the ground. She keeps wheezing.

“Oh dear,” says the quiet voice of Lift, and the vat slowly lowers to the ground. “Are you alright?”

“I don’t– don’t know? I mean, I’ve– destroyed civil-bots before. It doesn’t make sense! Why am I like this all of a sudden?!?” says Extortion her voice going up at the end, spilling out into more giggles.

“Maybe it’s because you thought of the Major as human! He’s a lot more human-like than the rest of these hunks of metal,” says Drug-runner, scooping up the remains of the Major and letting them clank on the bottom of the vat.

“That is true. Though remember, Extortion. This is a game. None of them are people, they’re just machines programmed to do what they're told. Their loss is of no real importance,” says the calming

voice of Lift, embracing Extortion and gently pulling her to her feet.

Her heart is still running at lightning-fast speed, but Extortion manages to stand on her own, right as Drug-runner releases a stream of potent acid on the body of the Major, making it sizzle and slowly melt into a puddle. Lift joins in, gesturing with the hand that isn't circling Extortion's shoulders, and the carpet where it died rips off from the ground as if clutched by invisible hands and gets dumped into the vat, suffering the same fate as the body.

"Aren't you going to take off those clothes?" asks Lift gently, gesturing to her coat and pants.

Extortion mechanically nods and dumps the coat into the vat, the fabric shriveling upon contact, and the pants go soon after.

Below those clothes, she's wearing a black, green scale-patterned shirt that is a few inches of fabric too long from being called a bra, with black booty-shorts and fishnet stockings. The black sensible boots she was wearing under her pants are revealed to go up to her knees.

Drug-runner wolf-whistles. "Damn! You sure look ready to make a few people drool at the party!"

Extortion blinks. She then realizes she just past up a perfect opportunity to strip in front of Lift. That girl hasn't blushed even once and Extortion wanted to be the first one to manage that. Or at least figure out if she's asexual. Damn.

"Extortion, your hands," says Lift, her soft voice floating like a ghost through the eerily-silent haunted house.

"What about them?" she purrs, tilting her body just right to give the soft-spoken girl a premium view of her assets.

"We need to destroy them," she answers, her eyes never wandering away from Extortion's face. Tough audience.

Still, she's right, so Extortion makes her hands float over to the acid vat, letting them hover above it.

"Could you do the honors for me?" she says. Drug-runner and Lift both take one hand each, and Extortion's hands go limp, letting the wire fall and dissolve in the acid.

"On three!" cheers Drug-runner. "One, two, three!"

As the hands hit the acid and begin sizzling, Extortion has to bite back a groan as her eyes flutter shut and her knees go weak.

“You know, you’ve never said what’s with that reaction to getting your limbs destroyed,” says Lift, making the vat hover off the ground once more.

“That’s for me to know and for you to find out,” says Extortion huskily, composing herself once more.

“C’mon, people are starting to get angry in the line. The excuse that someone barfed inside is not gonna hold on much longer!” Drug-runner chirps, turning to open a hidden door on the attraction, one that didn’t exist a day ago.

“True,” says Lift, the van following after Drug-runner’s cheerful steps. “The park has been so kind as to give us a place to stay unconditionally. It wouldn’t do to repay that kindness with undue delays. The poor employee outside doesn’t deserve an angry mob against her.”

Extortion assents, letting her hips sway to pump her up as she enters the hidden passage. She did challenge Larceny to a dance-off and she doesn’t intend to lose!

With each click of her heels against the warped concrete of the passage, the screams of the Major fade away in her mind.

Kingpin laughs at Graffiti’s joke, watching as the chamber is sunk in green and ultraviolet light, the metal supports all around making the party feel like a clandestine rave inside an abandoned factory, the feeling of danger wrapping around the partygoers.

The occupants themselves also looked dangerous; it was a villain party, after all. It was only natural everyone let their darker sides come out to play.

“Yo, Kingpin to Earth!” says Graffiti, snapping his fingers in front of Kingpin’s face. “You with me?”

“Sorry, I spaced out for a second,” Kingpin says, turning to look at Graffiti. “What were you saying?”

“Man, you really need to get out of that head of yours,” he says, laughing again as the white bandages on him seem to almost glow under the lights. His electric burns seem to be healing nicely and not preventing him from having a blast, but every time Kingpin sees them he can’t help the flash of anger. It’s not really anything against Kaminari or even their counterparts. No, he grits his teeth at the absurd system teaching the value of “heroic sacrifice” against the evildoers of society. What a pretty name to call suicide. And for what, to kill a few civilians and two villains?

“Eyup, he’s gone again,” Graffiti says, and Kingpin sheepishly rubs his neck once he notices he spaced out again. “I’mma go get something to drink, wanna come? I don’t mind if you’re not in a talking mood.”

“Thank you for the offer!” Kingpin says, smiling brightly, his chest warming at Graffiti's gesture of friendship. “But I think it’s time for the 'guests of honor’ to come out.”

“Oooh, I getcha!” he laughs, a spark of mischief lighting in his eyes. “This is going to be great!”

Kingpin smiles in response and waves his goodbye as he weaves himself through the tables set out. On the other side of the room, the dance floor is jam-packed with rowdy teenagers screaming at the top of their lungs.

Kingpin isn’t worried about the noise. The room is underground, having been excavated under the theme park with a little help from the ‘special guests’, and soundproofed to hell and back. It’s their bunker, quite literally.

He finally manages to get the attention of Assault, too busy juggling five people in his arms, and he fingerspells the word "guest”. Assault sets his complaining juggling balls on the floor and salutes, disappearing in through the crowd to get the people they need.

While he waits, Kingpin looks up the news about the trial on his phone, and frowns as they blare on and on about “new evidence presented of possible villain interference in the murder”.

He yawns, tears gathering at the edges of his eyes, swaying in place for a second out of tiredness.

He also checks the changes to the heroes’ reputation, which are… uneven. The richer sectors, those showered with constant propaganda and used to seeing heroes patrolling the streets almost every day, are

more ready to accept that explanation, while the poorer ones are more distrustful, whispers of false evidence floating from mouth to mouth and through chat forums.

It's fine. They don't really need to drive the heroes' reputation down, it's just another thing to keep them busy and unaware of the bigger picture. It's their own reputation which matters.

'Correction,' thinks Kingpin, as three struggling heroes and one robot are brought to center-stage, the music dying down. 'It's our own reputation that *used* to matter.'

With a flourish, Pirate Radio gets the memo and she tosses him a mic, menacing music playing in the background.

"Let's welcome our dear guests to the party!" Kingpin says.

Booming boos burst from the crowd, the bound heroes looking around in alarm.

"It seems the drugs are wearing off," comments Kingpin faux casually as he walks in front of the four struggling forms. "Good, that way the fun can begin."

"Like all good hosts, we must first give a toast in honor of the people that made all of this possible."

Kingpin receives the glass of sparkling cider from Larceny with a subtle nod of his head, raising his hand at the first captive.

"First, Yaoyorozu-san! Your efforts in creating the machinery we see around us were invaluable. Truly you outdid yourself."

She glares at him, at all of the villains, but her frame is far too frail and emaciated to present a truly fearsome figure.

"Next, Awase-san! Your soldering saved us countless hours and equipment. Your contribution to our cause is very much appreciated!"

If he could talk, Awase would be spitting out curse word after curse word, no doubt about it.

"Moving on, we have Fukidashi-san! Your quirk is truly an amazing one, so much versatility! From cutting, to heating, dissolving and creating, your quirk helped everywhere we needed!"

Fukidashi's head-bubble is perpetually set in an angry emoji. He's the

only one of the three that received another dose of the drugs. It's a shame he doesn't realize the true extent of his power, or he'd have broken out of those bonds at least an hour ago.

"And lastly, Lobot-san! Your cooperation was what allowed us to get another part of the password, and along with Extortion's efforts in getting into the government intranet, means that we now have *three* parts out of four for the Superweapon's password!"

Cheers rise from the villains.

The robot doesn't react. It simply watches on with a broken look on its face.

Kingpin takes a second to internally sigh. It was such a waste to be doing this, but without Con Man's quirk to keep them in line, keeping them alive is too much of a risk. Thus:

"Bring on the guillotines!"

With a few shouts, the four wooden devices are set out on the dancefloor, and each head manhandled to fit snugly where it was supposed to rest.

"But before we do so, there are a few people that want to say a few words to all of you."

With that, Forgery steps forward and helps both Singularity and Graffiti stand closer, careful not to aggravate their wounds.

She takes Kingpin's hand in hers, smiling softly before she turns towards Yaoyorozu.

"Stop doubting yourself. You don't have to do everything perfectly, that's what school is for. To mess up in a controlled environment so you know how to deal with your mistakes once you're out in the field," Forgery states, a soft smile gracing her face. Yaoyorozu is staring at her with wide eyes. "Also, the counselor that told us that the fat in our breasts should be used only as a last resort is a *fucking liar* ."

"Ooooooooh," rises from the crowd, witnessing the once-in-a-lifetime event of the prim and proper Forgery cursing. Kingpin kisses her hand, letting his adoration of her shine brightly in his eyes.

"Stop being so much of an idiot and get your head out of your ass," says Graffiti as his counterpart Awase tries to struggle, only

succeeding in hitting his head against the wood keeping his neck in place. “If you know your quirk is difficult to use in battle, then come up with a different way of fighting! Use traps! Climb buildings with it! Hell, you can even fight without your quirk! Don’t try to be a close-range fighter when you know you’re not just to make yourself more ‘marketable’.”

Awase stares at his counterpart as if he’d just told him to chug a whole jug of horse diarrhea.

“Fukidashi, I’ll be brief, ‘cuz being that drugged can’t be fun, and ‘cuz your counterpart isn’t here to give you this message himself,” continues Graffiti, adjusting his bandana. “Your quirk is a whole lot more powerful than you give it credit for. Look, if you focus on making the effects of your quirk more precise instead of just getting bigger results you’ll tread solidly down the path of becoming OP.”

Fukidashi nods, but his eyes are still a bit unfocused. Kingpin hopes the drugs are out of his system soon enough so he can watch this moment with the other eliminated people.

“Loboto,” starts Singularity, his face a mask of indifference to hide a hint of pity in his eyes. “You saw us, the Cleansers, finally bring to justice heroes that had gone unpunished for so long. You thought you saw an answer to your prayers and negotiated with us: our continued efforts to bring more corrupt heroes to justice in exchange for a part of the password. Know that we do intend to uphold our part of the deal, but we cannot have loose ends lying around. As such, we need you to die. Thank you, and goodbye.”

The robot nods, looking resigned to its fate.

The music swells as the blades of the guillotines raise, murmurs of excitement spread to the crowd, a few of them even going as far as to take the ropes raising the blades in their own hands, pulling them up even faster.

The bass drops.

So do the blades.

The robot’s head goes rolling on the floor, while the heroes watch with defeated faces, the fake blades spattered with equally fake blood around their necks.

The villains cheer, a few of them raising their cups and shouting their

approval.

“ *Nerd.* ” The group falls silent as one, turning to look at the source of the voice. Powerhouse stands where he is, glaring at them. “With me, NOW!” He shouts, hands in his pockets, as he turns and exits the room.

Kingpin sighs, a headache blooming inside his head. “Don’t worry, won't be long,” he says to the villains, ignoring his growing sense of dread and the concerned stares of the rest of the crowd.

The underground storage area that for some reason Powerhouse chose to get into is dark, only a few flickering bulbs lighting up the dreary place now and again.

As he enters through the door, he wishes he could just go to bed and sleep.

“So, whats–” His train of thought derailed as he’s punched in the face.

He manages to fall right even through the pain, to see Powerhouse glowering at him, his fists sparking now and then.

There are no words needed. If Powerhouse is asking for a fight, a fight he’ll get.

They rush at each other. They punch, kick, explode, pierce. It’s a blur of fists and curses of growled-out words that don’t mean anything, just pure frustration channeled into hits.

They fight, almost not touching the ground, practically flying, to avoid the crates strung about on the floor.

Neither of them is at their best, Kingpin having faced his own counterpart not long ago, and Powerhouse being part of the squad that got to deal with Mirio. Their movements aggravate fresh wounds, their minds too tired and too used to each other to concoct elaborate plans or strategies.

It's a blur.

It’s all just a violent blur, and Kingpin couldn’t even remember what he’d done during the fight.

All he knows is that both of them are panting, their hair even messier than usual, and they can’t take a single step forward anymore.

Powerhouse grimaced at a black eye he had, Kingpin held a broken hand close.

This isn't wasn't going to work. They'd destroy each other before anyone got the opportunity to intervene, and Kingpin can't afford to be injured for the next phase of the plan. Or at least, not *gravely* injured.

Maybe it's the tiredness, the bone-deep exhaustion that has plagued him ever since the War got announced that he'd done his best to curb but failed miserably, but the only thing that comes to his mind is to talk.

"Is that all you wanted from me? A fight?" asks Kingpin, his legs shaking from exhaustion.

"None of your fucking business you pebble!"

Why does he expect talking to work after so many years of words falling into deaf ears? They say doing the same thing and expecting different results is a sure sign of madness. Kingpin laughs an empty, hollow laugh.

"What have I ever done to you? What did I do to make you hate me so much since we were just kids– Why–"

"Don't act as if you don't know, you bastard! You're a sly fucker, stop playing dumb, stop looking down on me!"

"...Looking down on you? What are you talking about?" Kingpin asks, taking in Powerhouse's tense posture, gritted teeth, fisted hands that shake with effort or rage.

Powerhouse takes a stumbling step forward.

"What– Stop fucking pretending! You've– you look at me with those eyes and you ask if I need help as if I was weak enough to need it!"

"That's– that's not why I asked you if I needed help!"

"THEN WHY DID YOU FUCKING ASK!"

"BECAUSE I ADMIRED YOU!" screams Kingpin, before sighing and rubbing his eyes, careful not to smear the makeup used to hide his eye bags. "I wanted to help you because I admired you. Because I knew that you were going to be a great hero and if I couldn't be a hero

myself, then at least I could help you become the best hero you could be."

Powerhouses' eyebrows are furrowed, his face pinched as if Kingpin had talked to him in Greek.

Kingpin winces at the bruises that still litter his ribs from the fight with Deku. He's tired. He's so *so* tired.

"And, if I'm honest, I still admire you. Not as much as I used to, but it's hard to not find your determination and innovative mind impressive."

"It doesn't fucking look like it," he answers, his fists tightening and his jaw clicking shut.

"No, it doesn't, because I found something out last Civil War."

Kingpin sighs, letting himself slide down the wall beside them, sitting on the floor.

Powerhouse looks like he's tempted to just let an explosion knock him out by slamming his head against the wall, but in the end, he also goes to sit down beside the wall, almost as if he was doing that against his will.

"I won, but I didn't win on a technicality, because of my quirk or because of luck. I won because of my mind."

"What the fuck does that have to do with anything?!"

"I didn't always have a quirk, or luck, or people who supported me. But I've always, *always* , had my mind."

Kingpin turns to look at Powerhouse straight into his eyes.

"I had my mind when all my teachers told me I was being unrealistic when I said I wanted to be a hero. I had my mind when All Might told me I couldn't be a hero without a quirk. I had my mind during all those years *you told me I was worthless* ."

He looks at his hands, both callused from hard work, one scarred and slightly crooked.

"I thought that wasn't enough, so I didn't try at all. I never figured out how to throw a punch, even when you burned me and hit me every single day, because I thought that wasn't going to be enough. I never

even tried to judo flip you to stop hurting me, something I *could* do without a quirk until I suddenly had one.

And I got *angry*. Angry at you for making me believe I was worthless and didn't have a chance. But mostly, I'm angry at myself for ever believing you."

Kingpin grits his teeth in a vain effort to stop the tears from running down his face. He's always been a crier, and he's been keeping this to himself for so long that he can't keep it in anymore.

"I just– if I had just asked mom for self-defense classes or even viewed tutorials online or just did something more I could– I wouldn't have been so behind, I wouldn't have to make up for lost time. I could have saved so many more people– maybe even. Fuck."

A sob tears itself out of Kingpin's throat, but he doesn't care. Powerhouse has seen him cry too many times to count, yet… this is the first time he's *seeing him* cry. He's not something disposable anymore. His pain matters, Powerhouse can't just ignore it.

"You… you're blaming yourself for All Might's power too," says Powerhouse slowly, like the words don't fit right in his mouth.

Kingpin startles and turns to look at Powerhouse's expression. "...too?" he whispers and Powerhouse doesn't answer. His silence is answer enough.

"Were you enough of a dipshit to believe me when I told you to jump?"

Kingpin wants to lie, desperately. To say something that won't make him look like so much of a loser. But…They already fought. They already spit insults at each other. This is the first time they're too tired to fight. Their words are the only thing left.

"I did. I mean I was– I didn't *want* to do it but… I guess part of me thought that was what I *should* do. I used to fantasize about saving someone, maybe many people, in some grand heroic action and just, dying at the end. It would have been the best option. I would get to be a hero, mom wouldn't have to worry about me anymore, and would I get to prove that I was worth something to everybody else.

In the end, you were what stopped me. If I jumped, if I did die, you could get charged with instigating suicide. I didn't want to ruin your future."

"...That's– that's fucked up."

"Tell me about it."

There's a silence between the two, as their words sink in.

"I fucking hated you, because I thought you were looking down on me."

Kingpin turns to look at him so fast he gets whiplash, eyes wide and breath held. He's talking. Powerhouse is talking *to* him not *at* him, for the first time in his life.

"And then I fucking hated you because you– you– fuck. All Might chose you over me. For some fucking reason, he thought you were worth enough to be his favorite student. And I thought I didn't know why but then I realized you were like a cockroach, you kept coming back–"

"–and you didn't think you'd have the strength to keep going if you were in my position," says Kingpin, the words coming out of his mouth without his permission, but looking at Powerhouse's dumbstruck expression, he knows they're true.

"And then I went and turned villainous, and you were scared because it confirmed that I was stronger than you and I was going to look down on you even more and–!"

"Don't fucking rub it in you– wait."

He goes still, frozen like a statue. Then slowly he reaches to touch his ear, his fingers bumping against the comm.

The punch strikes Kingpin's face without warning, and on instinct he scrambles away, trying to get as much distance from Powerhouse as he can.

"YOU BASTARD! You planned this, didn't you?!? You planned it all with that nerdy little brain you're oh so proud of?!?"

"Powerhouse what are yo–"

He's interrupted by an explosion.

"Fuck the game! I'm gonna end you here and now you double-crossing bastard!" Powerhouse rushed at him with wild desperate energy Kingpin had only seen in him when he was trapped by the sludge

villain, setting off explosions left and right and everywhere and–

The crates.

“POWERHOUSE STOP. THE CRATES ARE–”

“SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH!”

Kingpin dodges back, keeping Powerhouse’s attention on him and desperately trying to direct the explosions upwards, but that only gives Powerhouse more space to work with.

His foot knocks against a crate and hundreds of vials of Powerhouse’s sweat clink inside them. They shouldn’t be fighting in a storage area to begin with, but fighting at ground level? They were careful before but now with Powerhouse on a rampage, there are dozens of flammable, volatile, poisonous and dangerous chemicals and devices lying around.

“THE CRATES HAVE—”

Another punch shuts Kingpin up.

He can’t– If something goes off, it could bring the ceiling down on them. Forget “dying” in the game, they could *die* down here.

“POWERHOUSE—”

“SHUT UP—”

“PLEASE JUST STOP—”

“YOU FUCKING PLANNED THIS—”

“I DON’T KNOW WHAT–”

Kingpin’s back hits against the crate full of demolition explosives. In other situations, storing them here, in that way, should be safe–

Powerhouse’s hands spark, as he shifts to a stance Kingpin recognizes from the Sports Festival. An all-out blast. Directed straight at Kingpin and the explosives.

“ *KACCHAN, DON’T* —”

“ *DIE!* ”

Bang !

There's red on Kacchan's face. It drips, covering his mouth and eyes as he sputters, the blast fizzling out in his hands.

There's a smoking gun in Kingpin's hands. A gun he just used to shoot Kacchan in the head.

"WHERE THE FUCK ARE YOU!" he screams, rushing at Kingpin, ignoring the rules–

Kacchan drops unconscious to the ground. Behind him is one of Ectoplasm's clones, hand still out-stretched from where he knocked Kacchan out. Another clone picks him up from the ground, carrying him off.

"I've got him. This matter will be addressed once the War is over," Ectoplasm said as he walked away.

There's a second where reality doesn't seem to move, like someone pushed the pause button on life.

They're in the War.

The teachers were watching everything.

The *teachers* were *watching everything* .

"Are you okay, Kingpin?!?" shouts Forgery behind him, and he's engulfed in a hug he doesn't know what to do with. "Where are you hurt?!? We have to get you out of here and into the infirmary–"

"Forgery, what–"

"This place isn't safe anymore–"

"Why–"

"Is it true?" asks Hacker, her voice cold and even. There's not a trace of her normal manic glee in her. When did she get in here? "What both of you said. Is it true?"

A stone sticks itself in Kingpin's stomach as he realizes.

"You were watching," slips out of his mouth. "You were watching everything. Who else was watching?!?"

There's a second where both Forgery and Hacker look guiltily at each other.

"Everyone," says Forgery, quietly.

Bile rises up Kingpin's throat, white noise filling his head and his hands begin to shake.

"But they weren't listening!" blurts out Hacker. "I put the video on the big screen without sound! Only Forgery, Assault and I know what you guys said!"

"Why? Why would you listen?"

"Because we were worried for you," confesses Forgery, wrapping her hands tighter around Kingpin. "We knew Powerhouse had been planning something for a while, and we knew there was something between both of you that you weren't telling us."

Hacker soundlessly adds herself to the hug, gently tugging on Kingpin's hair.

He followed them numbly, only half hearing their chatter as he walked into a room, everyone gathered into a crowd, mixed reactions all around as they stand around a screen.

"You did it, you took him out!" Extortion cheered, a wide smile on her face. "About time!"

"Let's have a *party* ," Pony shouts, the last part in English.

"Nice one boss," Larceny says, walking up and patting him on the shoulder, a smug smile on his face.

"What the hell happened?!?" asks Tank, stomping over with a confused look on his face. "You were just talking, and then he got mad, what– just what the hell?!?"

Kingpin opens his mouth. Nothing comes out.

Hacker puts a reassuring hand on his back and shuts down the party lights with her phone, leaving only the regular ones.

"We… Powerhouse and I, we were childhood friends. And… there are some things that he did that he wanted to leave in the past, and honestly, so did I. But he hated me, and I never knew why so I tried asking and he talked and–"

God, Kingpin wishes Con Man were here. He's the only one who could help him push back the rising tide of fear, both because of his quirk and just by being there.

"–and I forgot that the teachers were listening. He thought– he thought I was trying to get him expelled by revealing what he did. Kind of like what we did to Mineta."

Tank has always been an expressive person. Kingpin can see each and every flash of hurt, of confusion, uncertainty, anger clouding his eyes before only doubt remains.

"Tank?"

He doesn't answer. He just turns around and goes to the Bakusquad huddle on a corner of the room.

Kingpin feels sick.

He wants to stop. He wants to tell everybody that he wants to get out of the game, that he doesn't like where his mind is going, that he's been doing a delicate balancing act between his villainous side and his heroic side and he's beginning to slip–

"So, what do we do now?" asks Larceny.

Everyone's eyes are on him, questioning, looking, measuring and his heart is gripped in terror for a split second. He can't let them down, he can't, they're all depending on him and–

(And the last time so many of his classmate's eyes were on him like this, they all started laughing, saying "Midoriya, a hero? No way!" *He doesn't want to go back to that.*)

"I, um," Kingpin swallows the noose tied around his neck, clears his throat. "We'll proceed as planned. I just need– need a few minutes to revise plans now that Powerhouse is– gone."

Forgery sends a concerned look his way, and Hacker is staring at him like he's a particularly difficult line of code that she can't seem to understand.

(A voice in the back of his mind says: "Be selfish for once. You don't need to prove your worth to anybody anymore." It sounds a lot like Con Man's voice. It's too faint, too quiet, to notice.)

Kingpin smiles and this smile is all fake.

(A laugh plays on repeat deep in his brain. If he were aware of it, maybe he'd notice that he'd heard it once before at Kamino.)

"The party's over."

Chapter End Notes

:)
I'm not sorry at all.

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Those Who Witness

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“It seems the villains were prepared for this,” comments Ectoplasm, sending more clones out to the field with a sigh.

“It would stand to reason that they expected something like this,” comments All Might, swirling a cup of tea. “On the last War, the heroes organized a counterattack that had the villains on the backfoot for a while. If I have learned anything, it is that Kingpin is adept at learning from his experiences.”

Ectoplasm breaks away from his task for a second, turning to look at All Might. His words were meant as a compliment to Kingpin, but there’s an edge of worry to his eyes, and a far-away look to him, that makes Ectoplasm believe there’s something he’s remembering that he’d rather forget.

“That is a rather simple, yet elegant plan!” comments Nedzu, watching as the villains break into groups to defend their “fake” bases, and give their own teammates time to evacuate the important ones.

“Why is Shishida a priority target though?” asks Hizashi, making a tower out of coffee creamers just to have something to do with his hands.

Nedzu chitters, his ears twitching in amusement, while his villainous counterpart grins. “Well, it would do well to have his *nose* butt into the villain’s plans, would it?”

“You already know what they’re going to do?” asks Power Loader with a disbelieving stare at Nedzu. “Wait, nevermind. Of course you do.”

Both principals burst into chittering giggles, on the verge of turning into full-blown maniacal laughter.

It cuts off as one of the cameras begins flashing.

Ectoplasm turns his attention to it, to find a phone’s flashlight pointed straight at the camera, being turned on and off repeatedly.

Without a word, Power Loader chooses that camera and sets multiple screens to show the feed.

When the flashlight turns off, they find Kingpin to be the one holding the phone, staring at the camera impassively. In the darkness, none of the teachers can see his features well.

He pulls out a card and shows it to the camera.

'Please, shut down my and Deku's audio for our fight. Only both All Mights, both Nedzus and Recovery Girl should have access to it.'

Ectoplasm's eyebrow climbs over his forehead at the request.

"Oh *hell* no," says Vlad King, pointing at the screen with squinted eyes. "Thisch kid doeschn't get to– hic!– doeschn't get to do schomenting like–"

The audio feed coming from Kingpin's and Deku's comms cuts off, while both Nedzus are quick to throw wireless headphones at both All Mights.

"Are you scherious?!?" Vlad King slurs, glaring at the furry principals.

"Quite so. Kingpin has a good reason to ask for this. It is a confidential secret, after all."

That shuts Vlad King up fast and makes him settle down in his seat.

A ray of moonlight finally breaks through the darkness and Ectoplasm frowns at the oddness of Kingpin's costume. Both All Mights stiffen like planks.

When everybody in the room turns to look at them oddly, they wave away their concerns with a "I thought he looked like someone else for a second there."

Slowly and with suspicion in their eyes, all Pro Heroes turn to look back at the screen.

All Might presses the earphone tighter against his ear, not that it will do much in the end. He just supposes a bit of extra reassurance that the secret of One for All will remain hidden still couldn't hurt. None of the teachers have any sort of auditory augmentation quirk, but it can't

hurt to be cautious.

He's well aware he's beginning to sound paranoid, but what he's seen so far gives him the confidence that being paranoid right now is excusable.

On the screen, smoke bombs detonate in the plaza, sinking it into deep darkness.

The strategy the 'Ghoul Squad' seems evident to All Might as soon as it starts. The smoke allows Nightmare to use his quirk to his fullest potential while opening windows of opportunity for Lift to shoot, while Blackout keeps the smoke from being blown away by Nejire.

It's easy to see that the strategy, while enough to eliminate Ashido and grievously injure Tsunotori, won't do much to Nejire besides keep her busy for a while.

And then Deku kicks Kingpin off the building.

All Might sighs as soon as he sees where Kingpin crash-lands, Deku jumping inside after him.

"Deku is making a mistake by fighting inside there," comments Toshinori, seeing the same problem All Might saw. "He's better suited to open spaces, what with his emphasis on strength over maneuverability."

"That Problem Child is taking things too personally to think rationally, isn't he?" grumbles Aizawa.

"You don't know?!? You forced Crusade into witnessing an execution almost identical to that of his brother! You made Hacker torture Hatsume live on video. You tricked heroes into killing one of their own!" screams Deku, and All Might winces.

Aizawa looks at All Might's wince with a questioning expression.

"Your theory was right," answers All Might at Aizawas unspoken question. "Deku *is* taking things too personally. He also believes that Kingpin was the one to order all the villain team to do the things they did."

"And Kingpin took that opportunity to rile him up?" asks Aizawa, guessing the content of the conversation he can't hear.

All Might nods.

“Figures.”

“We can’t be the Symbol of Peace,” states Kingpin with complete conviction as he rolls up the sleeves of his jacker. *“One Symbol of Peace, one hero with a smile isn’t enough. It wasn’t enough when things went wrong. It wasn’t enough to stop the threat of the League, to stop All Might from tearing himself apart in the name of justice, to prevent the devastation at Kamino…”*

All Might winces, remembering his failure, the uncomfortable truth that he tried to ignore until it caught up to him. Still, a ray of hope blooms in his chest that Kingpin, his successor, won’t turn out like him, that he’ll be capable of keeping the people of Japan safe without tearing himself apart in the process. If anyone could, it would be him.

“In my world… Bakugou wasn’t the only one the villains were after.”

All Might stills, his eyes widening. He isn’t going to reveal that, is he?

His hopes are dashed as the black tendrils he awakened at Kamino sprout from his hands, gasps breaking out around the teachers in the viewing room.

“What is *that* ?!?” screeches Hizashi, knocking down his coffee creamer architecture.

“It’s not a support item’s doing, that’s for sure!” screams back Majima, looking at the database with an almost frantic edge to his movements.

All Might ignores them, his eyes glued to the screen, even as he watches his counterpart through the corner of his eye.

“All for One wanted me as well.”

Toshinori flinches like he got punched in the stomach. He whirls around to face his counterpart, who is looking away from the screen a look of shame shrouding his face.

“All for One–” Tsohinori cuts himself off as All Might nods, his hands tightening into fists.

“He had him for *days* . Toying with him, trying to convince him to join his side… it didn’t work of course. But Kingpin hasn’t been the same since.”

“Are you saying–” asks Aizawa, his eyes staring at them with such intensity that Toshinori thinks that he activated his quirk for a second. “Are you saying that All for One had *Kingpin* in his grasp?”

“Not only him,” interrupts the Principal of the villain dimension, his ears twitching as he watches the screen. His voice is uncharacteristically serious. “Aside from Kingpin, four other students were taken, though aside from Kingpin and Powerhouse, they were kept in stasis for the most part. “

The principal turns to the teachers present, looking at them with eyes like chips of obsidian. “It was the greatest disgrace the school has ever faced.”

“Damn…” Kan breathes out, looking at the teachers of the other dimension with pity in his eyes.

“Pass me the tequila, will you?” grumbles Eraserhead, and takes a swig straight out of the bottle. “Fucking media had a field day. Goddamn villains, goddamn press, goddamn shitty–”

Toshinori turns his gaze back to the monitors in the room, trying to ignore the frantic *tap, tap, tap* of Present Mic as his foot moves up and down and up and down and up and–

“Schince when can the kid kick thdrough steel?” says Vlad King, blinking at the screens.

“Alright, no more alcohol for you,” says Kayama, swiping the bottle out of Vlad King’s hands. She looks at it for a second, then takes a swig out of it and passes it to Toshinori, who gingerly places it back on the bar.

“And there he goes again with the gun. What is up with these kids and guns?!? Is it like, a new trend or something?!?” asks Hizashi, and nobody knows if he’s serious, hysterical, or if he just wanted to make a joke to lighten the atmosphere.

Eraserhead snorts. “They convinced Snipe to continue teaching them how to shoot. Most of the kids stop by the shooting range every once in a while. There are four of them that are practically his apprentices by now, though.”

Toshinori frowns. Guns are instruments of destruction. Letting children handle them leaves a sour taste in his mouth.

('But aren't you teaching them how to *be* instruments of destruction with their quirks?' a voice in his head says. He shuts it up.)

Deku releases a blast of air, earning him a chance to jump away from Kingpin. The banter between Kingpin and Deku continues, a back-and-forth exchange on how they should fight.

" *Oh, save me that idiotic propaganda catchphrase. We followed that advice, and where did that get us? A hair's breadth away from not being able to use our arms anymore.* "

"Oh, come on! What did he say?" whines Kayama, looking a few seconds away from throwing a shoe at the All Mights just to get them to say something.

Toshinori takes pity on her and repeats Kingpin's words.

"It took you becoming villainous to grow a sense of self-preservation. Are you serious, Problem Child?" grumbles Aizawa, while Eraserhead sighs from beside him.

"The 'Plus Ultra' mentality doesn't encourage caution," answers Eraserhead, making a few more notes in the notebook in front of him. "Kaminari's sacrifice could have been avoided, had he not been so stuck in that one track of mind."

A crash draws their attention back onto the screen, as Kingpin kicks Deku through the window, sending him hurtling through the air and onto the ground.

All the people in the room flinch subtly, as Kingpin plants a boot straight on Deku's chest, as the hero struggles to inhale the air knocked out of him.

" *A word of advice before I kill you. Stop trying to be the Symbol of Peace. Stop trying to be All Might.* "

" *But the– the hero system relies on a Symbol of Peace to work .*"

" *Then remake the system. If it's broken, fix it. You can't just continue like things are and keep yourself in a false sense of security. It'll only hurt everyone in the end.* "

" *But All Might's legacy–* "

Toshinori wants to hate All for One for leading Kingpin to think such

things, for trying to pit his successor against him… but he can't. Because, deep down, he knows that, at least in those things, he's right. He needs to admit it now. He was right. His whole career led him to this; a Japan scared of change and a body that will probably not last more than a few years.

" *Ended up being 'smile through the pain while you live on borrowed time!* ""

" *…what?* "

" *Don't– don't tell me you don't know.* "

Cold runs through Toshinori's veins as he remembers that Deku, *Izuku,* doesn't know about–

"No, Kingpin don't," mumbles Toshinori, horrified.

" *He's dying. All Might is dying* ."

Izuku's face breaks, his eyes wide and disbelieving, a few tears springing up from them.

Murmurs of concern break out between the teachers.

"Why. Why did he–" breathes out Toshinori, wanting nothing more than to reach through the screen and take Izuku into his arms and hug him until the hurt in his eyes disappeared.

"It's his way of being kind," answers All Might solemnly. "Being told that truth is what drove Kingpin into action, into trying to go against the current instead of following it. It made him stronger."

"Why did you tell Kingpin the truth about our condition?" asks Toshinori, dumbfounded.

"I didn't," replies All Might, his hands tightening in his lap. "All for One did."

"Oh," is the only thing Toshinori can say.

At least until Deku himself bursts with those black tendrils, rage, pain and confusion spreading through his face.

"SERIOUSLY, WHAT THE HELL ARE THOSE THINGS!" screeches Hizashi, insistently pointing at the screen.

“It *has* to be his quirk, but it doesn’t make sense! Wasn’t his quirk strength augmentation?” shoots back Aizawa. “Nedzus, what the hell is going on?!?”

“We’re not sure on our end either!” answers All Might, glancing nervously at the eerily calm pair of rodents. “We thought it may have been All for One’s doing at first, shoving a second quirk on Kingpin without him knowing, but he’d told us repeatedly that he was sure it came from his own quirk! After he showed no signs of suffering from quirk strain like other victims of All for One, we believed him!”

“And now Deku is exhibiting the same behavior,” Eraserhead finished. “Just what in the world *is* his quirk?”

“Did– did they just knock each other out? How?!?” gapes Kayama, her hair falling out of the ponytail she put it in at the start of the viewing.

Toshinori doesn’t answer and neither does All Might. They catch the glances both Principals are sending them, promising a good long talk about One for All.

Toshinori doesn’t even know what to tell them.

He wishes he knew what was going on.

Nedzu is calm.

His mind works best when he is calm, and so he keeps his emotions on a tight leash, only letting them out every once in a while.

Now is not the time to let his surprise show.

As Deku is carried away by Nejire, Suneater engages Kingpin and his newly-arrived reinforcements. It’s clear the villains don’t have the upper hand as of now, but they are recursive and that can change at any minute.

Nedzu once again tries to fit the pieces of the puzzle together with the new one he just received.

Deku manifested the same black tendrils Kingpin did. Meaning, Deku either received the quirk from All for One in the past, he had it since he was born and only now it is manifesting or One for All has hidden dimensions none of them considered.

The first one was Nedzu's first theory once Kingpin got back from his stint with All for One with a new ability almost completely unrelated to the capabilities One for All boasted. Now, that theory could only be true if All for One was involved with the Izukus' life before they even enrolled into UA, which was unlikely. Still, it never hurt to cover one's bases. An investigation might be in store.

The second was far-fetched, what with the Izukus medical record and toe joint. Unless the record was falsified, of course. Yet another point of investigation.

And third… if this is truly a new dimension of One for All, then the Izukus will need even more guidance and preparation to deal with such a complex quirk. There must be *some* way to learn what One for All was capable of–

With a blink, Nedzu shifts from information-processing to information-gathering as Con Man throws a grenade at Suneater.

It's the work of another second to figure out how the encounter is going to end.

Chance was something that was likely to alter his predictions and the less variables he had, the more likely he was to make a mistake. Nedzu hadn't counted on this at all. Con Man was such an integral part of Kingpin's support that without him…

He plunged himself back down into his mind, ignoring the circumstances playing out on the screens exactly as he'd predicted them.

Nedzu reevaluated everything he knew about Kingpin, his abilities, his influence and motives. He revised all future courses of action that he could take. He took into account the influence of his teammates, each and every one of them.

Should he stop the exercise?… no. Not yet. It was a test for Kingpin, like the last objective was in the past War. A test to see if left to their own devices, the heroes would succumb to their dark side.

Nedzu *needed* to know, because Kingpin had immense potential. The potential to completely change Japan as they knew it. He needed to know if he had to set countering plans for Kingpin's weaknesses, to prevent him from going too far in the future, where he'd have even more weapons at his disposal.

To know if he'd have to take down one of his most precious students.

He needed more information.

He decided to wait and see.

“CAN WE GET THE SOUND BACK ON,” screeches Kayama, absolutely unrepentant of the dirty looks a lot of her coworkers shoot back at her. When the sound finally crackles to life, she turns her attention back to the screens.

Kayama sighs at the heroes’ defeated faces and bowed backs as they enter their bases’ auditorium.

She can’t exactly blame them. Being a few hero deaths short from having lost *half* their numbers is incredibly demoralizing.

She decides focusing on that is almost worthless and decides to focus on the spy instead.

Condense is… not exactly a great actor. He fidgets constantly, a habit he was not prone to do normally and constantly enters rooms he has no business being in, were he not a spy.

However, it doesn’t seem to matter. Condense has the aura of a gentle giant and the habit to keep quiet. This makes people assume he’s more harmless and simple-minded than he actually is. He doesn’t quite have what it takes to be an infiltration hero, not with how distinctive his face is, but he’d probably do well negotiating hostage situations.

At least he seems to know how morale works, reminding the heroes of Suneater’s elimination to make them more sullen.

“They’ve already started fighting,” comments Power Loader, with his lips pursed. “Last War they lasted a bit more before the infighting began.”

“Maybe it’s because this time, the villains are actively pushing them into fighting,” theorizes Eraserhead, without looking up from his notes.

Kayama decides to pick up the bottle that she passed to Toshinori a bit of time ago and gulps the liquid like a fish in preparation of having to hear twenty-something teenagers argue about what they should do.

She almost spills the bottle when Bakugou shouts loud enough to make the speakers crackle and walk up to the front of the auditorium.

“I’ll admit,” says Eraserhead, and eyebrow raised as he watches Bakugou give a rallying speech at the front of the crowd. “I did not see this coming.”

“Maybe it’s because he’s not the leader?” offers All Might. “If he’s not the leader his kind of speeches feel more like a rallying than a tyrant's order. That’s what chafed the other heroes in the last War, isn't it?”

“I don’t know, you’re the one who knows how to suck up to people,” shoots back Eraserhead.

All Might doesn’t look taken aback or offended at that comment.

“Deku is using his brain for a change,” says Aizawa, his tone an odd mixture of sarcastic and relieved. “Why hadn’t he offered himself as a strategist more? His insight could be what finally unravels Kingpin’s plans.”

“It’s probably because he didn’t want to be like Kingpin,” comments the villain Nedzu. He doesn’t elaborate.

“If being like Kingpin gets him a sense of self-preservation, then by the love of everything, *be like Kingpin,* ” Aizawa says, gripping his pen tighter in his hands.

“What a shame,” begins the hero Nedzu. “What a shame that Deku hadn’t thought of that a few hours prior. If he had, he might have opened a window of opportunity for the heroes. Oh well.”

Kan is not exactly thrilled to be watching the whole War.

He’d caught on somewhere between the bombs detonating and the trial that he shouldn’t be drinking this much, if only to look out for his counterpart that already looked completely plastered.

He had a light headache that was threatening to become a full-on hangover migraine, but he would deal with that later.

Right now he has to deal with the villains having chosen a goddamn *amusement park* as a hideout. And they’d charmed all of the employees into silence. Minimal amount of threats, minimal amount of bribery.

How the hell had they managed *that?*

...Maybe it had to do with the fact that most villains were thrilled to dress up as employees and go around helping with the park, giggling at how they didn't even need to cover their faces to not be recognized.

They're weird. Shit was weird since the start, he should've seen that sooner, but he didn't because he's a dumbass.

Kan takes another water bottle and downs it in one go to stall his hangover, but for now, he focuses on the screen as the villains file into a circus tent and take their places, bruised, battered and sore from their battle with the heroes.

Kingpin's… Kan has absolutely no idea what Kingpin's feeling. That kid went from the reckless 1-A glass cannon to the most *terrifying* villain he has seen in a long time and the kid's not even a real villain!

The teacher's lounge quiets down at the same time as the gathered villains do, and there's a sense of foreboding creeping up Kan's back that he very much wants to drown in alcohol but can't.

"WE WILL NOT LET THEM GET AWAY WITH THIS!" blares from the screens, Kingpin's voice startlingly clear. His eyes stare straight at the camera, boring into the teacher's, lightning sparking in them, before looking away at the crowd of villains.

Kan blanches, his jaw dropping to the floor as thirty-eight heroes-in-training turn into a frenzied mob, calling for the blood of their heroic selves.

"What the fuck…" escapes from his mouth and Kayama audibly gulps beside him.

"If they were to attack us all at once–" begins Hizashi, then cuts himself off. His unsaid 'they would crush us' floats in the air.

"These are our students we're speaking of! They would never do something like that," rebuffs All Might, but right now, Kan can privately admit that his optimism is very much *not welcome right now.*

"Are you blind?!? Look at them! They've gone *insane* !" rebuts Kan as the war cries coming from the speakers get even louder.

"Nonsense! If there's anything that I've learned about the Hero Class Villains–"

"–is that they would do anything to protect their own. And they consider *us* one of their own."

Kan's mouth closes almost on his own accord. The kids… protecting them? *What* ?

As if a switch was flipped, the shouts from the villains die down and they exit the circus arena, picking up stray wrappers as they go. It's almost as if the few last minutes never happened, except for the newly-determined set of their shoulders and the sharp smiles they shoot each other.

"... Isch there schome sort of drug in the alchohol? I jshust had a trip of the kids wanting to kill someone," asks Vlad King and Kan sighs at his counterpart's shenanigans. No wonder nobody ever wanted to go for a drink with him.

"Just, go to sleep," grumbles Kan, and pushes his counterpart onto the couch, slapping a wet rag on his forehead.

Eraserhead indulges in an activity he'd done once before: comparing the hero and villain sides' methods.

He's beginning to find a common thread.

The villains have time to set up another party, probably not as wild as the one they'd thrown back before the preparation week, but nonetheless a party in the middle of the exercise. He can't even dock points for that, because the previous events had eroded team morale and this party is picking it back up and shooting it through the roof.

It certainly is a sight to behold; 1-A and 1-B cooperating flawlessly, friendships sprouting between criminal activity and playful banter. Eraserhead would bet his *quirk* that there's never been such a tight bond between classes in the history of UA.

Ironically, the only exceptions to those rules are Kingpin and Powerhouse.

Their reasons couldn't be any more different.

Kingpin is far too busy making changes to plans and basically driving

himself into nervous muttering spirals. There's a rotation of people that come to try and pry him off his work, but he knows how to sweet-talk each of them into *just five minutes more, I'll go to sleep after that. Promise!* The only people he'd actually listen to after a while have things to do, or are out of the game.

On the other hand, Powerhouse is far too busy sulking on one of the exposed beams of where the party is supposed to be held. Nobody pays him much attention and that just gives Eraserhead a headache. It's basic logic to keep an eye out for the volatile members of your team. Why hadn't Kingpin assigned someone to watch him–? Oh, right. That someone was Con Man.

Goddamn you Problem Child.

Moving on.

On the other hand, the heroes haven't stopped working ever since Bakugou's little rallying speech. They've been weaving in and out of their base to meet with the police, accessing cameras and records to give evidence to their lawyers in order to allow their teammates to go free, revising plans and making changes, *ignoring the fact that Condense had gone into the kitchen when it wasn't his turn.*

Eraserhead sighed. It wasn't completely the heroes' fault that there wasn't a sense of camaraderie between their members. The sheer amount of work piled on their shoulders kept them from the small moments of respite that built up trust between Pro Heroes in reality.

Strangely enough, the only two that seemed to be building any semblance of trust between them were *Bakugou and Midoriya.*

Their reasons proved to be very similar.

They used each other as sounding boards, bouncing off plans off of each other and shooting the other's suggestions down with a tone that seemed to say "I know you can come up with something better than that."

It was a bizarre mirror of circumstances that Eraserhead needed to wrap his head around.

Now if only Kayama could stop gushing about how *great at manipulation and infiltration Extortion is! Did you see that?!? Did her counterpart teach her that? Yes! Only she could teach someone the art of seduction so extensively–*

Eraserhead had already taken the largest dose of headache painkillers he could.

He wasn't paid enough for *this*.

Kayama keeps a steady stream of praise going for Extortion. She simply can't help it! She'd never thought she'd find not one, but *two* students she'd gladly take on as her apprentices. With Larceny as an aboveground hero and Extortion as an underground one, she'd get to pass on her techniques for both kinds of jobs to the next generation! She still cannot believe how lucky she is.

"We get it, Kayama! They're your darlings, now shut up! There's *some* of us that want to hear what's going on!" snaps Kan, and Kayama shoots him an ugly look, but still switches her compliments to a mental stream of praise.

She can't deny she wants to watch what is going on on-screen attentively, anyways.

The exchange between the Major and Extortion is a thing of beauty. It's common enough for other robots to tune the transaction out, but littered with just enough flirtatiousness to make those that would still watch turn their heads away out of politeness or discomfort. Extortion's façade is polished, good enough to fool the Major's system even with a few flashes of disgust and hate peeking out in her eyes from time to time. And at the end, she has the PDA with the password she needs and the Major following her recklessly into the Haunted House, all alone.

"Hizashi?" asks Nedzu, the one from the hero dimension, without looking away from the screen.

"Hmm"

"Could you please notify Hound Dog to call in some trustworthy psychological staff from outside the school?"

"...Sure," the blond responds, typing in his coworker's number with a vaguely terrified voice.

Say what you want about Hound Dog's counseling methods, but they got *results* . If he wasn't going to be enough to deal with the fallout of

the exercise… Kayama wonders what could make Hound Dog's expertise not be enough.

She stops wondering as soon as Extortion whips out the garrote wire, decapitates the Major and has a breakdown right after.

"Is anyone else *worried* at how easy it was for Extortion to kill the Major?" asks Kayama wincing, reaching for a martini she'd prepared for herself not too long ago.

"I'm more concerned about how desensitized Lift and Drug-runner are to the bot's death," confesses Aizawa, frowning as the pair of them get rid of the evidence and talk Extortion back to her feet.

"They were villains in the last War," comments Eraserhead, furiously scribbling in his notebook. "They've destroyed plenty of civil-bots for it to lose the novelty, even if the bots act more human-like now."

"…Okay, If nobody's going to say it, then I will," drawls Snipe, startling everybody in the room. "Is nobody worried about the fact that we're basically training the villains to be *black band heroes?"*

There's not a single murmur in the teacher's room.

It's an open secret between them that there are heroes who work for the government with a license to kill as part of the hero version of the Black Ops, even if they don't know which ones exactly.

The thought of her students snuffing out lives in the name of justice sends bile raising up her throat.

"The Hero Commission would never choose any of them as a black band. They value obedience over everything else and the Hero Class Villains are far too willing to mutiny for that. Besides, they prefer raising their own black bands," say both Nedzus in unison.

Kayama doesn't know what's creepier, their dead-eyed stares or the fact that they have information on the inner workings of the black band selection.

At least the villain party's starting. That'll get her mind off things.

Aizawa grips his pen in his hand tight enough to get his knuckles white as the "guests of honor" are dragged to the dance-floor.

Of course they occasion they had to be celebrating was an *execution* .

He ran a hand over his face, pressing in his temples to try and stave off another tension headache.

“Don’t look away,” chastises his counterpart hitting him with a pen identical to his. “Watch every movement closely. If we’re to teach them right, we need to understand them.”

Aizawa nods, shoving his hair out of his face and poking Power Loader on the side to get him to monitor the heroes in the meantime.

“That’s needlessly cruel,” says Thirteen, referring to the fake words of congratulations Kingpin is showering on the guests of honor. “They’re already beat! The heroes won’t get to see this, so this won’t tank their morale and the “guests” have little to no chance of escaping!”

“Don’t think like a hero,” grumbles Eraserhead, staring with tired yet focused eyes at Thirteen. “This is meant to raise villain morale and it’s doing a good job as far as I can tell. Plus, the villains vowed to help their counterparts grow as heroes, correct? Their suggestions are doing just that.”

“Yeah, but guillotines?!?” interrupts Kan. “Isn’t that just… too much?”

The teachers of the villains laugh. Eraserhead too, even if his laugh is just one humorless bark.

“Yeah, no. The villains have no definition of ‘too much’. Besides, the guillotines were The Sparkle’s request. Just look how he’s sparkling,” says Power Loader, enlarging the feed of the villain in question’s ecstatic face, muttering random bits of French under his breath.

“When did he get so creepy?!?” mutters Kayama.

It’s unbecoming of a teacher to say that, but Aizawa completely shares his opinion. Is this the same kid that tried to make his hero name ‘I Can’t Stop Sparkling?’.

“And would you look at that. They got Forgery to curse. Is nothing safe from corruption anymore?” says Snipe with the same tone of a documentary narrator.

“If only you knew…” mutters All Might.

“With the burns, Singularity looks even more like Dabi. Am I the only

one seeing that?" says Toshinori hesitantly.

It sounds like a far-fetched theory, Aizawa has to admit. Dabi, the serial arsonist, somehow related to Todoroki Shoto, son of the Number Two– no, Number *One* hero? And yet, with the electric burns all over him covered in dark-colored burn salve it looks more and more likely. Didn't Endeavor have a special move that consisted of turning his fire blue?

Looking into the matter probably wouldn't be more than a waste of time, but he'd rather be safe than sorry.

"The villains are *this close* to getting the Superweapon! Well, they still have to get the fourth part of the password from the Police Headquarters, but that's it! They even have a way of getting the coordinates from the heroes!" says Thirteen, sounding impressed. "The War is almost over!"

"I personally wouldn't count on that," says Toshinori, a tiny amused smile playing on his lips. "The youngsters have a way of surprising us time and time again. I'm expecting the heroes to come up with some kind of desperate last-minute plan."

The thwack of the guillotine's blades hitting wood and metal rings out through the teacher's room.

"Well, they better hurry up, 'cuz their chances of winning this thing are getting smaller by the second," shoots back Kan, who then mumbles under his breath: "Along with *my* chances of winning my thirty thousand yen back."

"Shhhhh!"

The room snaps back into attention, following both Nedzu's unspoken command.

"Oh, no," breathes out Thirteen as Powerhouse calls Kingpin out in front of the whole crowd, and Kingpin follows behind him to the storage room. "This isn't good. Ectoplasm?"

"I'm on it," he says, closing his eyes to better concentrate on his clones.

"Tell Recovery Girl to prepare," warns the hero Nedzu. "This has the potential to turn out badly."

The first punch comes without warning. The fight is on.

Aizawa's pen flies above the page, noting differences in fighting styles, techniques, split-second decisions, anything he can record.

He simply can't tear his eyes away.

Both of his students are fighting like rabid beasts, all desperate strikes and tired gambles. They're both at their wit's end, be it from rage or tiredness, and he can't help but wince at each and every injury they get.

He hadn't noticed Powerhouses' self-destructive tendencies until now, seeing him completely disregard his healing injuries in favor of breaking Kingpin's hand under his foot. He should have known. Why didn't he know about this?

Finally, both combatants are just standing there, panting, one in front of the other, unable to take even one step more.

And then they start *talking.*

"What have I ever done to you? What did I do to make you hate me so much since we were just kids– Why–"

"Don't act as if you don't know, you bastard! You're a sly fucker, stop playing dumb, stop looking down on me!"

"...Looking down on you? What are you talking about?"

"What– Stop fucking pretending! You've– you look at me with those eyes and you ask if I need help as if I was weak enough to need it!"

"That's– that's not why I asked you if I needed help!"

"THEN WHY DID YOU FUCKING ASK!"

"Because I admired you! I wanted to help you because I admired you. Because I knew that you were going to be a great hero and if I couldn't be a hero myself, then at least I could help you become the best hero you could be."

"What is Midoriya talking about? His quirk's perfect for a hero!" wonders Thirteen.

"Well, uh. Truth-be-told, Midoriya-shonen's quirk didn't manifest until he started training for the UA Entrance Exam," confesses Toshinori,

smiling sheepishly.

Aizawa finds himself at a loss for words.

“When was this?” asks Eraserhead, unable to hide the steely edge to his voice.

“...A few months before the exam?” he lies, because Aizawa knows how to spot a liar and Toshinori nor All Might have any talent for it.

Aizawa wants to whip out his scarf and strangle the truth out of both Toshinoris, because he will not tolerate the fact that he pushed a *student with less than a year’s knowledge of his quirk into training meant for kids with years worth of experience with their quirks, because he had misleading information to work with!*

“Aizawas, please keep your tempers in check. There’s still a War to watch,” says Nedzu, and Aizawa grudgingly lets go of the edge of his scarf.

“It doesn’t fucking look like it.”

“No, it doesn’t, because I found out something last Civil War. I won, but I didn’t win on a technicality, because of my quirk or because of luck. I won because my mind.”

“What the fuck does that have to do with anything?!”

“I didn’t always have a quirk, or luck, or people who supported me. But I’ve always, always, had my mind.”

Aizawa leaned forward in his seat. The explanation as to why Kingpin and Powerhouse simply didn’t get along was finally going to be in his grasp. If he could get to know what tore them apart, with a bit of nudging he could get the two most innovative students in his class working together and getting along for good. He could just *feel* the number of extra hours of sleep he'd get for it.

“I had my mind when all my teachers told me I was being unrealistic when I said I wanted to be a hero. I had my mind when All Might told me I couldn’t be a hero without a quirk. I had my mind during all those years you told me I was worthless.”

“Wait, you told *Midoriya* he couldn’t be a hero?” gapes Present Mic at both All Mights who are trying to look at anything but the other teachers. “Both are your number one fans!”

“We couldn’t exactly let a *quirkless child* attempt to enter a career like this! It’s far too dangerous,” answers Toshinori, subconsciously putting a hand over his stomach.

“Kingpin demonstrated quite thoroughly that his best assets have *nothing* to do with his quirk,” countered Eraserhead, his eyes narrowed.

“Please this is not the time to–”

“I thought that wasn’t enough, so I didn’t try at all. I never figured out who to throw a punch, even when you burned me and hit me every single day because I thought that wasn’t going to be enough. I never even tried to judo flip you to stop hurting me, something I could do without a quirk, until I suddenly had one.

And I got angry. Angry at you for making me believe I was worthless and didn’t have a chance. But mostly, I’m angry at myself for ever believing you.”

The room was silent.

None of the teachers could voice their outrage.

This, thought Aizawa, explained *so much* . How Deku flinched at the sight of his supposed childhood friend, how he was so quick to stutter and look away, to yield to the demands of others. How each compliment sent his way was first met with surprise, then with utter delight.

It explained how *both* Midoriyas were so quick to sacrifice themselves.

If they thought of themselves as having less value than others, of course they wouldn’t care about what happened to them.

Of course.

Of course.

And all this time, Aizawa had been telling both how they shouldn’t be a *burden on others* because of how they used their quirk, reinforcing the idea that they were nothing but dead weight unless they were saving someone else.

And he called himself a teacher?

“I just– if I had just asked mom for self-defense classes or even viewed

tutorials online or just did something more I could– I wouldn't have been so behind, I wouldn't have to make up for lost time. I could have saved so many more people– maybe even. Fuck."

"You… you're blaming yourself for All Might's power too,"

"Please don't," whispers All Might, as if the two on-screen could hear him. "It wasn't your fault, it was meant to happen, please don't take that burden upon yourselves–"

Toshinori says nothing, but his fists are so tight his knuckles are white.

"Were you enough of a dipshit to believe me when I told you to jump?"

"I did. I mean I was– I didn't want to do it but… I guess part of me thought that was what I should do. I used to fantasize about saving someone, maybe many people, in some grand heroic action and just, dying at the end. It would have been the best option. I would get to be a hero, mom wouldn't have to worry about me anymore, and would I get to prove that I was worth something to everybody else.

In the end, you were what stopped me. If I jumped, if I did die, you could get charged with instigating suicide. I didn't want to ruin your future."

"Oh dear," whispers Nedzu, Aizawa doesn't know which one because he's too busy trying to make sense of the warring anger and horror in his chest.

"Powerhouse just confessed he suicide-baited Kingpin. And, this happened before the Civil War, so that means Bakugou did that to Midoriya too," comments the other Nedzu, his tail firmly curled around himself. "We *completely* underestimated the severity of the situation."

"What do we do then? We can't just punish a student for something they did *before* coming to UA!" argues Present Mic, his voice going up an octave at the end.

"But he *has* to understand his actions were *wrong* . There has to be something–" argues back Kan.

"Please, let's leave this discussion for later," interrupts Nedzu. "Things like that can only be decided with a cold head."

Reluctantly, Aizawa let his attention drift back to the screen, where

Powerhouse finally starts talking, and confesses his envy of Kingpin's determination, of how threatened he felt by Kingpin winning the last War...

Maybe, Aizawa thinks. Maybe this could be the start of an alliance between the two, what they need to stop fighting each other, to finally heal the crack present in the villain team since the start.

He presses a button, the other teachers turning to him. "After the war is over you and Kingpin will have a talk with me about your behavior before UA," he spoke, Nedzu sweati– why was he sweating? A sweating Nedzu makes anyone regret their actions. He sees Powerhouse freeze, and his face twist with anger.

And then Powerhouse starts attacking Kingpin, even more mercilessly than before. And this time, Kingpin doesn't try to fight back. He's trying to salvage the situation, to understand what made Powerhouse break their delicate truce, but Aizawa wants to reach through the screen and scream at both of them to stop right this instant those *are flammable chemicals behind you–*

"Ectoplasm! Restrain Powerhouse this instant!" orders Nedzu and Ectoplasm nods, creating two more clones just in case–

Bang!

Aizawa stares in disbelief as red goo drips off of Powerhouse's face.

"Did– did Kingpin just *shoot* Powerhouse?" asks Hizashi.

He doesn't get an answer.

They're all too busy staring in terror as Bakugou gets knocked out and carried away, and then as Forgery and Hacker admit everybody was watching, as they help Kingpin out of the room, as Kingpin gets greeted by *congratulations* on killing his childhood friend.

Aizawa argues with himself on whether he should call off the War or not.

"–he thought I was trying to get him expelled by revealing what he did. Kind of like what we did to Mineta."

"...They did *what?!?"* " says Kayama, standing up from her seat without noticing. "How did they manage to *expel* him?"

“Their strategy was rather simple,” Eraserhead starts, exhaustion dripping from his voice. “The girls all did ‘distracting’ things during battle exercises. Mineta lost focus on those and did poorly. Even if the method was underhanded, it was still within the rules and it was Mineta’s fault in the end for getting distracted.”

“And of course, they only did that when there were teachers present and watching,” says All Might, rubbing his face. “I never knew how little it took for Mineta to do some… untoward things until they forcibly made them happen in front of me.”

“His scores were so poor that when he failed the practical final exam, not even his academic standing could save him. We had no choice but to expel him, or else it would be grounds for suing.”

“Another thing for Kingpin to hold over our heads–” begins Kan, but Present Mic waves a finger at him.

“Nope! This time, the plan came straight from Forgery and Pirate Radio. They’d had enough of his bullshit, apparently.”

“...oh.”

A gurgle comes from the back of the room, followed by a groan and a figure rising from behind the couch.

“What’d I miss?” asks Vlad King, waking up from his alcohol-induced nap.

As one, every teacher in the room throws something at him.

Chapter End Notes

> Well! This was a chapter much longer than I'm used to! I'm glad it came out this way though. Sorry for not updating sooner even though the chap was already written for a while. I've just started uni, so getting time to write/edit is harder than anticipated.
>
> Fun fact: I have already written up to chapter 26! Only two chapters left, my dear readers! And one of them is the epilogue. Oooooh, I'm so close!!!
>
> Anyways...
>
> List of character names: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SsJSQICW2O1Qn8JWwl06mKNNzKxr73QWvPAWxNQ5aYg/

edit?usp=sharing

And! I've made a list of everyone's status up to chap 23! https://docs.google.com/document/d/1exwbuhpWQnVB3w3_aGcSPP_d9gRDXDENLDfQ4TdYSg8/edit?usp=sharing

I did my best to make sure it was acurate, but I'm still paranoid that I may have accidentally spoiled character's deaths in it, because all I could base it on was my *current* character status list, which is on chap 26 after all...

I'M ANNOUNCING: I won't be responding every single comment from now on. It's simply not logical to be using what little time I have answering comments when I could be writing and/or worrying about the fact that there are people awating my response. I'm sorry if this disappoints people, but it is a decision I decided I must make.

Enjoy the story! Until next chap!

Karma?

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku sat surrounded by whiteboards, three markers between his fingers and another one clamped tightly in his mouth as he paced from one corner of the room to the other.

The marker in his mouth was to keep him from muttering.

Right now, he had no idea if the villain's influence on their systems had been wiped out, the reboot still unfinished, so he was taking absolutely no chances, even though Kendo laughed at him for putting Sero's tape on all of the cameras in the room.

With a shake of his head, Izuku went back to the plans he had scrawled all over the whiteboards.

He checked the time on his watch.

7:44 pm.

They still had a bit of time before the Superweapon’s location was revealed. He needed to use it.

So, he pushed all of the whiteboards out of the way and used the only clean one to summarize his plans.

He was in the middle of doing exactly that, when the doors of the conference room he was using opened.

"Deku-kun?" came Uraraka's voice from the entrance, a cheerful smile on her face. "Are you busy?"

"Hmdfhps," Izuku said, before he remembered the marker and spit it out. "Yeah. I'm kind of a little bit wrapped up at the moment?

"Oh," her face fell, and she stepped into the room. "Well, uh. We're having dinner in the mess hall, and we were trying to get everyone to eat together."

A stab of guilt went through Izuku's chest and he glanced at the floor.

"That's... that's a great idea Uraraka! But uh, we already scheduled a strategy meeting for this time."

"Alright then," she sighed, scuffing a shoe on the floor. "Just, remember to get your plate? I don't want you to go hungry."

"I won't forget. Thank you Uraraka," Izuku said, setting a hand gently on her shoulder, before working up the courage to hug her.

She giggled wrapping her arms around him gently.

"I'm going back to the mess hall. Good night, Deku!"

"Night Ura– Ochako!" Izuku stuttered, and watched as the door closed.

In that second, tiredness hit him, the muted headache he'd had since the fight with Kingpin letting itself know. He grit his teeth and bent down to pick up the fallen marker.

"Midoriya!"

Izuku yelped, banging his hand against the metal marker-holder the whiteboard had and he hissed in pain.

"Midoriya! Are you ok?" Iida said, striding over to inspect Izuku's hand.

"I'm fine! I'm fine," Izuku said, and it was the truth. It would probably bruise later, but it was nothing he couldn't work around.

"If you say so," answered Iida, before pointing at the conference table where four plates of steaming pasta sat. "Please, take a seat."

Izuku then noticed that not only Iida had arrived, but Kendo and Bakugou too.

"Uuuh, for how long have you guys been there?"

"For a few minutes, at least," answers Kendo, with an amused smile on her face. "Are you going to explain all... this?"

Izuku turns back to his eight full-of-ink whiteboards that looked a bit like a toddler had tried to copy complicated equations with each line out of order, plus the one board that looked a bit more presentable.

"Right, so um. Let's start by knowing where we stand."

Izuku pointed at right, top-most corner of the board.

"We know we have an hour before our systems are clear of villain interference and only a few hours until the Superweapon's location is revealed. In eighteen hours, give or take, the Superweapon will default to the heroes. Our reputation oscillates between 40 and 55 percent, 73 percent of civil-bots are still alive, 62 percent of buildings are in good condition."

"Get on with it! We already know this shit," grumbles Bakugou and Iida sends a miffed look his way as he picked up his fork and starts eating the pasta.

"Yeah, right, so um. The biggest suggestion I have would be to just... give up on keeping our reputation up."

He sees their disbelieving stares.

"Just– just hear me out, ok? So, the rules say that we can– we can still get extra credit if we have two out of three of the the percentage conditions! We're already– already spread very thin, and our reputation's kind of a lost cause, so if we stopped focusing on it, we could just protect civil-bots and buildings and try to plan around what the villains are going to do!"

"I would have never thought of that! Bravo, Midoriya!" applauds Iida, a goofy smile on his face.

Izuku rubs the back of his neck, feeling his face warm at the compliment.

"So, yeah. I, uh. I think that we should focus on keeping the villains from the Superweapon password, protecting the people and planning how to take the Kingpin down. That's... basically it."

"On the matter of the Superweapon passwords," Kendo comments, pulling out a scrap of paper from her pocket. "I talked with the police earlier and I confirmed they have at least one part of the password."

"Do the fuckers know if the villains have the police’s part of the password already?"

"They said their password is still safe and sound."

"Alright, assume the worst-case scenario with that password and let's say it's the last part the villains need."

"We won't let those fuckers touch it," grins Bakugou, a small explosion bursting from his palm.

"I'll coordinate the password's protection," confirms Kendo, before turning back to Izuku.

"So uh, the protection of the people," says Izuku. "We'll just have to be very careful to send groups that work well with each other and, since we're not caring about reputation anymore, to take the patrol routes that cover the most territory possible."

"Right," says Iida, a determined glint in his eyes. "Leave that to me!"

"And... I wanted to be the one to make the plan to deal with Kingpin," admits Izuku, a determined look coming onto his face.

"Well, you *are* him, in a sense..." says Kendo, looking worriedly at Izuku. "But wouldn't that make your plans to take him down a bit... predictable?"

"Why the fuck do you think I'm here, you handsy hag?" spits out Bakugou, grinning savagely. "The Kingpin fucker *hates* Powerhouse. He would never expect the nerd and I to work together."

Both Paragons exchange worried glances between them, but in the end they sigh and agree.

"So, the meeting is over," declares Kendo. "Plan things tonight and we'll discuss in first thing in the morning. We need to eat, after all. Perhaps there are people still in the mess hall?" she suggests, before picking up her plate and standing up from her seat.

Izuku imitates her and so does Iida. Bakugou does too after a bit of grumbling.

Iida stumbles on the way over and he has to use the wall as a support.

"Are you okay, Iida?" asks Izuku, looking worriedly at his friend. "You're looking pale."

"I am fine," answers Iida, pushing himself off of the wall. "I'm just slightly dizzy. Perhaps it's the tiredness, I'm sure it'll pass."

"If you say so..." answers Kendo, with a worried look on her face.

Iida stands back up.

Izuku keeps his attention on him, as they walk forward.

Iida sways. Stumbles. Falls.

"Iida!" Izuku says, kneeling down beside him. "What's wrong?"

"Everything's spinning..." he weakly mumbles.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH"

Kendo snaps her head up to the direction of the scream, and starts sprinting down the hall. “Midoriya, take Iida to the infirmary!" she screams.

Bakugou doesn't waste anymore time and runs after her.

Izuku nods and is about to use his quirk when he remembers the black tendrils. He couldn't control them then and if he hurts Iida right now...

Instead, he decides to pick Iida up and sprints down the hall. For a second, he has the memory of sprinting in Dagobah beach with three broken vacuum cleaners in his arms. The experience is pretty similar, except Iida keeps mumbling nonsense from time to time, asking for his brother and wincing every time they pass under a bright light.

He hears footsteps behind him, only to see Bondo running a few paces behind. Something in Bondo’s expression seems… thoughtful, but his face is not exactly good for expressions, so he can’t tell.

He bursts into the infirmary to see Reiko hurriedly applying cold compresses to people's foreheads. He watched them come in, gesturing for him to lay him down in a free spot beside a groaning Tetsutetsu.

"What happened?!?" asks Izuku, taking a few of the cold compresses and started helping too.

"They all started to get dizzy," says Reiko and after that she says nothing else, focusing hard on the patients with a frown on her face.

Izuku frowns, already starting to piece things together.

"Is it lethal?" he asks and Reiko takes a second to respond.

"I don't know," she answers. "From the looks of it, it could be but I don't know..."

Izuku grits his teeth and watches as Mirio walks in stumbling through

the door-

"You too?!?" screeches Izuku, before almost everybody in the infirmary groans.

"Yeah, me too. I'll help–"

"What do you mean you'll help? Don't you have the same symptoms as everybody else?"

"Yeah, but my quirk makes me regularly experience vertigo. It's nothing I can't handle and the sooner we find out what this is, the more likely we are to survive it!" he says, a reassuring smile on his face, before he pushes a few buttons on a nearby machine, pricking his finger on it and then turning around with sure steps and passing the blood sampler to Izuku.

"I would do it myself, but better safe than sorry!" Mirio says, before taking the cold compresses from Izuku's hands and applying himself to his task, only stumbling minimally, and his smile not slipping from his face even once, even when Bondo passes him nausea medicine and downs the bitter liquid in one go.

Izuku looks on in awe.

Mirio is... Mirio is everything Izuku wants to be. He's standing strong in the face of adversity, helping people with a smile on his face.

As Izuku turns back to helping his teammates, he feels a pit of guilt in his stomach.

Izuku can't even trust his quirk right now. He knows that if *Mirio* had One for All instead of him, he'd already would have figured all of this out.

"Wait … how did we get poisoned? Wasn't Iida under close watch with Kendo?" Tetsutetsu asked with a cough.

There was a pause.

They were all eating pasta, weren't they? But not everybody is being hit with the same illness. If anything, a few seem to be getting hit worse, even if their quirks, like Shishida's, should have given them *some* degree of resistance.

If a villain had slept in, they would have simply poisoned the big pot

of pasta and gotten out. But…

This is the work of multiple hours: lightly poison a few to create chaos, then target the most important people with lethal doses.

Only a traitor or a spy could have done something like that without being seen.

Deku rushed to his comm.

“Bakugou, Uraraka, lock down the building! No one in or out!” he got a verbal response, but then was taken out of it by more coughing from the others.

Mirio dropped to the ground, unconscious.

But the battle wasn’t over. It took them multiple hours to stabilize the rest and find the antidote, but by then five heroes were already lost.

Mirio, Todoroki, Sato, Pony and Iida.

Izuku tightens his fists.

He *won’t* let the villains get away with this.

Tank doesn't know what he's supposed to think. Doesn't know who he's supposed to believe.

One second he had been staring at the screen, hoping that Powerhouse and Kingpin could finally heal the rift between them, only for Powerhouse to be killed.

Tank flips himself over in his bed, tangling himself further into his covers, but he doesn't care. He can't sleep like this. He's been worrying himself sick the whole night.

"Tank? You awake?"

He turns around, facing the sound of Feedback's voice in the darkness.

"Yeah. What's up?"

"I don't really know man. I can't stop thinking."

"That's a first," teases Shibari from behind Feedback, making him yelp

and try to hit him. From the sound of it, he misses and hits Shibari's futon instead.

"Sh–shut up dude! It's not funny," he answers, flopping back onto his futon.

"Guys, c'mon don't start fighting now!" whispers back Tank, trying to calm them both down. "What are you thinking of, Feedback?"

"I– ugh, this is gonna sound bad but... I'm mad at Kingpin," Feedback says, curling into his sheets."I– I mean, I know it's stupid 'cuz Powerhouse was probably going to blow the base sky-high with all of us in it, but did he really have to kill him? He could've shot his leg or something! And besides, how the fuck did he get so mad in the first place?!? I just–"

"Whoa whoa, calm down, you're gonna wake her up!"

The three of them fall silent, shooting concerned glances at Drug-runner's futon, before they relax.

Tank clutches his sheets tighter, guilt coursing through him. He doesn't like keeping Drug-runner out of this. She's his friend! He trusts her!

It's just... She's too loyal to Kingpin. She'd take his side without hesitation.

"Look, I'm kind of mad too," confesses Tank, propping himself up on one of his arms. "But..."

He sighs, gathering his courage. "I know that Kingpin wouldn't lie about something like this. Yet, I *know* Powerhouse is just as heroic as any of us, deep down. Those two things can't be true at the same time, so either Kingpin has been lying to us all this time or... or I don't know Powerhouse as well as I thought I did."

There's silence among the three of them.

"Powerhouse is kind of your bff, isn't he?" says Shibari, sitting up on his futon. "You know him a lot more than I do. But it's kind of common knowledge that there was some bad blood between him and Kingpin, and let's be honest, Kingpin wouldn't hurt a fly unless that fly wanted to push someone down the stairs or something."

"But in the War–" begins Feedback.

"He was trying to help us become better heroes so that we could save more people," answers Shibari without hesitation. "It was kind of his thing, ya know?"

"But what about now?" asks Feedback, worry in his voice. "He was caught by that villain dude and he came back different! What if he's actually a villain now–"

"If he was, then Powerhouse should be too," snaps Tank, frowning. "He was caught too, remember?"

"Urgh, this is getting nowhere," Shibari laments, burying his head in his pillow. “We’re just losing sleep for *nothing* .”

"Guys, could you please shut up?" groans Pirate Radio, lightly throwing her pillow at them. "I don't want to be tired when we go fight the heroes."

"Sorry," the three of them say, laying back down.

"What were you three talking about anyways?"

"Uhm..."

"You know, just–"

"We were talking about how Kingpin killed Powerhouse."

"Tank!"

"Dude, you can't just say it outloud like that!"

"Lying isn't manly!"

"Why wouldn't you want to say it?" asks Pirate Radio, the frown evident in her voice. "Wait, are you scared of what Kingpin would say?"

"I mean, kinda?" says Feedback. "He's our boss, isn't he?"

"..."

Pirate Radio stands up, walking over to where the three of them are. "Okay, get up."

"Why?" asks Feedback, blinking.

"We're going to go talk to Kingpin."

"What?!? We can't just do that!"

"Yes we can," she says, pulling out a pair of slippers from her bag. "It's not late enough for him to have gone to sleep and it's obvious this has been keeping you guys awake."

Tank opens and closes his mouth a few times, trying to make up an argument not to go, but Pirate Radio simply hooks one of her earphone jacks on his arm and pulls.

He has no option but to stand. His feet harden reflexively at the cold floor, so he doesn't bother to go for his slippers.

"This is a bad idea PR, suuuuper bad idea," rambles on Feedback as he's tugged by the neck towards the door and out the corridor. "He's our freaking boss, we can't just go up to him and tell him we're mad about something he did!"

Tank walks after them, Shibari beside them with a grimace on his face.

"What if he gets mad! What if he gets mad and kills us how he killed Powerhouse! Wait– are you taking us to him to get executed?!?"

She turns around with an expression of disbelief on her face. "What the– what kind of person do you take me for?!?" she says, her hands fisted at her sides. "Whatever, let's just get to him. The sooner I can go back to sleep, the better."

It's quiet after that, quieter than rooms above a Fun House should be. Tank had never noticed just how eerie it is to be inside a theme park after hours. From the windows, he can see the deserted walkways, a few missed wrappers sliding around in the breeze. The lights are all off– not even the ferris wheel shines. He keeps half-expecting someone to walk out of one of the rides.

Tanks decides to stop looking at the windows of the corridors before he creeps himself out.

When he turns back, they're already at the doors of the Planning Room, the soft, artificial glow of lights coming from under it.

PR doesn't even knock, she just pushes the door open and whips all three of them on their backsides to make them come in.

"Just talk to him you three idiots. Good night!" She closes the door.

"You... wanted to talk to me?" says Kingpin, a cordial smile on his face turning his chair around to face them.

"Uuuuh, yeah?" says Feedback, scritching his head, looking at the ceiling, floor, walls, anywhere but Kingpin.

Tank wants to sigh. Way to not look suspicious, Feedback.

"Yeah, actually," says Tank, figuring the best thing to do is just get it out. They've come all the way here, they have the opportunity. He's not going to do the unmanly thing and let this opening pass! "About you and Powerhouse."

Kingpin freezes, his smile straining. "Oh... really?"

There's something wrong about his tone, about the way he sets himself, but Tank can't seem to put a finger on why.

"Eyup, so uhm–" c'mon manliness, don't fail him now! "I'm... still kind of mad that you "killed" Powerhouse. What'd he do to you?"

"All of you are mad about that, aren't you?" he says, looking down at his hands. "To be honest... I'm mad too. I'm your leader, I'm supposed to be able to handle situations like that. I'm sorry."

"I... was not expecting an apology," says Shibari, his eyebrows climbing on his forehead.

"Why wouldn't you?" says Kingpin, pulling out chairs for them to sit. "It's the least I owe you. I was too hasty and eliminated Powerhouse, *your friend* out of the game. That you came to me is a sign that all of you care for him a lot, and I can't help but think that admirable," he admits, in a bittersweet tone.

Tank smiles at the compliment.

"I'm glad all of you came to talk to me, anyways," smiles Kingpin earnestly, making Tank feel as if he's looking at the sun itself. "The last thing I want is to leave resentment to fester."

"I mean, yeah. It's kind of impossible to get everyone to like you? After all pretty sure we can't get Shigaraki to like us, right?" Feedback laughed a bit before pausing, popping his face from behind Tank's back.

Kingpin laughed softly and Tank found himself smiling back.

“All of you should be asleep, though,” he says, with a playful tone. “We need you rested so we can all do our best tomorrow!”

How could he have ever doubted Kingpin? He was Midoriya at heart, just with a scary mask on.

“Looks like we were all losing sleep for nothing after all,” says Shibari, yawning wide. “C’mon, we should go.”

“I’ll accompany you,” Kingpin says, standing up and walking towards the door.

They start softly chatting on the way to their room and Tank thinks the corridors don’t look so creepy anymore, with Kingpin’s voice curling around them like a blanket.

The door arrives too soon, in Tank’s opinion.

“Are you going to go to sleep too?” asks Shibari, slinging an arm over Kingpin’s shoulder, careful not to hit him with his tape-dispenser elbows.

“No, I still have a few things to finish up,” answers Kingpin, leaning into Shibari like a sleepy kitten.

“Good night then!” cheers Tank, only to get shushed by the other three.

“Nighty night dude,” whispers Feedback, playfully ruffling Kingpin’s hair so it charges up with static electricity, leaving it looking like a pom-pom.

“Night!” whispers Kingpin back, waving them goodbye and walking silently down the corridor again.

Sleep yanks at Tank’s eyes, so he slips back into his own bed, nestling himself into the sheets and letting the warmth seep into his bones.

It’s only with a half-awake mind that he realizes Kingpin never answered his question completely. Tank still doesn’t know what Powerhouse did to make Kingpin hate him at all.

But he isn’t worried.

How could someone who smiles like the sun do anything bad?

Prism waits in a café, curled below the table, completely invisible to anybody around her. She takes sips of the hot chocolate Temperance bought just for her, careful to not let any civil-bot take a look at the "floating" cup, even though there's only like three people including her because it's almost 12 pm.

The news blare on about the decided outcome of the heroes' trial, but Prism doesn't pay much attention to it. They have a few bribed judges on that trial, so the result is already a given.

Prism's comm beeps once and she starts dusting off crumbs of the cookie she stole and ate before. She takes a second to pick up her trash as Temperance blinks and shakes himself out of his trance.

"Have a good mediation?" she asks, standing up to go towards the exit.

"Yeah. Are you ready?" he answers, his tail swishing slowly behind him, subtly warming it up.

Prism takes a page out of his book and stretches her hands, adding a slight bounce on her step to prepare.

"Ready as I'll ever be!" Prism says, tuning into the news on her cellphone in preparation for the court's verdict.

Temperance smiles at her, and Prism can't help but smile herself. It's not her fault Temperance is so cute!

"–We are live from the courthouse and it seems the judge has made a decision. The final verdict–"

Prism starts shaking her hands to try and keep her adrenaline in check. It wouldn't do to start maniacally giggling in the middle of the café where bots can still see her. It's difficult to concentrate on the news right now, with lighting crawling up her veins, but Prism forces herself to pay attention to them.

"–villain interference, yes. Yet, heroes are trained and expected to recognize when such trickery is at play. The fact they didn't points towards hero incompetence, which is something we cannot allow to happen in our city. In fact, the late Koda's actions of separating himself from the group while in duty points towards his incompetence

as well. Any hero that foolishly attempts to go solo opens themselves to villain attacks through their own negligence of th–"

"Ouch," Temperance says, adjusting his gloves one last time as the reporter-bot on screen continues on.

Prism has to agree.

"–The four heroes will get their licenses revoked–"

Prism quietly cheers as the cold air outside of the café gets to her face, thankfully stopped by her visor.

Both she and Temperance walk to the square where the Central Police Station is, alive with activity despite the late hour.

Temperance, presses a few disguised buttons on the "normal", wide-rimmed glasses he has on. "There's... six cops. Wait no, there's five cops and one prisoner right now."

"A prisoner? We're really lucky!"

"Yeah," says a soft voice behind them and both of them turn to see the small, slightly nervous smile of Animal.

"Alright, we're all here!" smiles Prism, watching her countdown slowly lower on a corner of her visor. "All of you remember the plan?"

"Yeah," says Temperance, while Animal just nods.

"Cellphones off, then!"

While Prism turns off her phone, a rat peeks out of a nearby manhole and crawls up to Animal's shoulder, where he whispers a few things to it. Animal gently clips a mini-comm onto the rat's ear, followed by a set of mini camera-and-microphone on its forehead.

Then, the rat jumps off, crawling into the inside of Temperance's pant leg, and holding on tightly.

Temperance doesn't utter a word about it, while Prism makes a face at it.

Two more rats, four pigeons and a stray cat slink closer, and Animal repeats the process with each of them.

One rat goes into Temperance's back, clinging to his shirt, while

another slips back under the manhole cover. The four pigeons set themselves around the station, acting as their system of alert. The cat jumps into Temperance's arms, mewling with happiness.

Prism activated her suit, allowing it to disguise her heat signature just enough so the sensors don't register her.

"Alright," Prism's comm beeps twice. "It's showtime!"

Temperance smiles, readjusts the puffy green jacket he's wearing and walks into the station with the cat in his arms, looking like just another random citizen.

Prism walks closely behind him, making as little noise as she can. When he opens the door, she slips in behind him.

"Umm, hi?" says Temperance, making a show of adjusting his glasses nervously. "I'd like to report a lost cat."

"Be right through!" calls a voice from the inside.

Prism vaults over the table separating them and enters through the door behind the counter before it closes.

"So, what do we have here?" says the police officer, their voice muffled through the wall. "Yes, this seems to be the cat we're looking for."

Prism smirks and keeps running deeper into the station, weaving around robotic police officers with ease. She spies the two rats that were clinging to Temperance running alongside her, having slipped from his clothes without anybody noticing.

She finds the place she's looking for: the archive room. With deft hands, she slides a lock-pick sewed onto her costume free, biting her tongue while she cracks the lock. She counts the seconds, knowing that giving back a lost cat shouldn't take very long.

Smart of the policeman to store the password on paper instead of in a computer, knowing that the villains have an extremely skilled hacker.

She walks carefully towards the camera perched on one of the corners of the room, climbing the wall with the sticky soles and gloves she has, clicking in a looper on the camera: one of Hacker's newest inventions.

She opens the cabinet.

Alarms start blaring, their sound piercing Prism's skull and making her clap her hands around her ears.

"What happened?" says Prism into the comms.

"The heroes managed to get a warrant on me," says Temperance, grunting, before the crash of metal and a wild yowl comes through the line. “They must have gotten enough footage to reconstruct my face.”

"Temperance, make your way in. Animal, flood the station!" orders Prism, going through the papers in the cabinet as fast as she can.

She finds what she's looking for and stuffs the paper in one of the pockets of her costume, closing the cabinet with a slap. She then pulls out a KB device, dropping it inside the cabinet and letting it clink in the bottom of it.

She whirls around, leaping out the door. The police-bots are already responding, sending alarms to the hero HQ that are never going to be answered since their systems are still down for the reboot, but only for twenty more minutes.

Other police stations are still available.

They have to get out of there.

She runs, weaving through police-bots heading through the entrance. She sticks a few more of the KB

She almost shrieks when she feels tiny nails dig into her costume and looks down to see one of Animal's rats climbing up her leg. She doesn't make a sound, but she shudders as the rat slinks all the way to her head and jumps to a nearby window, unlocking it to let in a veritable flood of rats, mice and a hundred other animals Prism doesn't have time to see, because there's a police-bot in the corner running at full speed trying to close the window.

Prism laughs and lets the animals dogpile it, biting into the crevices of their metal plating, chewing through cables with wild abandon.

"Temperance, situation?"

"The floor's getting too crowded with robot parts for me to move freely," he answers, grunting once before the screech of metal tearing

apart sounds in the background, accompanied by gunshots. "Did you get what you needed?"

"Oh, absolutely!" Prism says. "Let's get out of here!"

She finally arrives at the door to the outside but it's closed and needs a code, so her only option is to stay put and wait for another bot to try and get out.

Meanwhile, she watches the spectacle through bullet-proof glass.

Temperance slips under a police-robots' arm, slashing it with a pair of knives. The bot's arm goes flying.

With no other restrictions, the rest of the bots open fire, and the turrets hidden in the corners of the room come to life, unleashing a flurry of bullets at Temperance.

He doesn't even blink as his armor extends from under his clothes, coming to wrap itself around him, hiding every inch of him under grey plating. It even covers his face, leaving only two black eyeholes.

It looks a bit clunky and not very stylish, considering it's Hacker's first prototype, and by Temperance's request it's all function over form.

With flicks of his wrists, two mini-guns deploy from the backs of his palms, and he shoots four turrets before the police-bots realize it's useless.

They start to pull back, and the door opens to let a few through, and Prism uses the opportunity to slip through again. She pauses a few seconds to give time to the cat to slink in and disappear in the corridors.

"Hey!" she says, and Temperance turns. The mask makes him look as if he was deadpanning, but Prism knows by the set of his shoulders that he's smiling.

There's a clink on the floor and Prism turns to see what looks to be teargas. She simply adjusts her gas mask to cover her face and turns back to Temperance.

"They're probably trying to box us in to buy time for the heroes to arrive," she says, putting her hands behind her back and smiling.

"So we can't let them," Temperance says, moving his fingers against

his arm in a specific formation. Five glowing points spring up from his fingers, a slight whine coming from them. "How much time do we have?"

"Three minutes, give or take," she responds, deciding to ruffle through the metallic rests around the room.

"We'll be out of here by then," he says, the plasma points coming out of his fingers growing in length. He slashes the door open, and Prism smiles as even more alarms start ringing inside the station.

"Guys?" comes the soft voice of Animal through the comms. "Neither of you should go outside."

The door, now with melting hinges, tips forward and falls–

To reveal a crowd of police officers and five police cars sitting outside, gun after gun after gun drawn in their direction. They're saying the same old "Put your hands in the air!" spiel at the top of their lungs.

Prism exchanges a glance with Temperance and looks back at the army outside.

"Animal?" calls Prism through the comms. "Tell all animals to get out of the station subtly, please."

"Can you please give me a minute for the cat?"

"Sure!" she answers, slipping a pair of crystal knives into her hands. "Off I go!"

Prism starts running towards the crowd, the police not seeing her at all, and she slips within their ranks.

Temperance takes a step forward. Bullets and teargas start raining down on him.

There's a whirr as the hovershoes on his feet come to life, allowing him to close the distance to the policemen in a second.

Not wasting any time, Prism starts to slice and hack as many police bots as she can from the back, most of them too busy paying attention to Temperance's swift form, spurts of thrusters lighting up from his costume automatically to compliment his punches, allowing him to leave dents in the asphalt as if it was nothing.

It's fun, she thinks, as she vaults over a police car, sinking her knives

in the backs of the robots, slashing tires just for the hell of it.

"Neko-chan freed the prisoner and she's already out!" comes Animal's joyous voice. "You can both make your escape!"

A smile as wide as the moon and as sharp as a blade paints itself on Prism's face. She throws a handful of KB devices below the cars and runs into the crowd of police reporters leaving the commotion behind.

She spies Animal standing in a corner near the police station and she runs to him.

A loud fshhh resounds behind Prism and she turns to see Temperance spraying gasoline out of tubes hidden in the knuckles of his armor.

Through the door behind Temperance bursts the prisoner, a gang-bot with one of the guard's pistols in his hand.

He opens fire against the police right about when Temperance drops a smoke bomb down.

He starts running right at the policeman too, getting to where Prism is in the matter of seconds.

"Time for the KB to go kaboom!" she cheers when he finally stands beside her.

The police station bursts into flames, lighting the gasoline all over the police officers with a brilliant blaze so hot Prism can feel it almost buffeting her face from where she is.

"Welp, now most of the policemen are busy! C'mon let's go!"

"Not so fast!"

A bright light blinds both of them and Prism drops the knives so they don't give away her position.

She turns and ends up looking right to a very pissed off squad of heroes, Monoma right at the front. Behind him, Tokoyami, Kuroiro and Honenuki stare right at them, the flames of the police station making them stand out like black silhouettes against the crackling orange.

"Prism, Temperance, Animal," Monoma says, his face contorted into a crazed smile. “All of you are under arrest.”

Chapter End Notes

I am frankly apalled at how long this chapter was ready and I kept forgetting to post it. Oops?
Anyways! Losses from both sides! Unintentional mirrors! *Very* subtle foreshadowing of how the War's gonna end! (It's the kind of foreshadowing that you get when you're re-reading, but I would bow down to whoever manages to guess it right!)

Thanks for reading!!!

New Management Still Fails To Improve The Situation

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Click.

“So then Kingpin accidentally hit the wall in his sleep, and Nightmare’s and The Sparkle’s room had a hole in it, which sent Dark Shadow into a curse tangent that made Powerhouse *laugh* !” Prism told the story with a grin.

“Oh my god that’s so hilarious. One time I caught Bondo eating a–”

“Stop gossiping with the criminal Tokage!”

Click.

“Start talking!” Tetsutetsu shouted.

“We’re talking now,” Temperance replied.

“Don’t play games with me!”

“I’m not playing a game. I’m talking to you.”

“Then tell me where the villains are hiding.”

“I’d rather not.”

“You think that’s a choice?”

“Well, yes. I’m a villain, but I don’t monologue my plans and location.”

Click.

“So, tell me where Kingpin is,” Shinsou asked, Animal not responding and instead fidgeting with his hands. “Just talk it’ll be over soon.”

“Um … Animal is selectively mute, he won’t talk under pressure.”

"... THEN WHY THE HELL AM I HERE!?"

Click!

"Tell me where they are or else!" Tetsutetsu shouted.

"I'm sorry, you'll need to be more specific on the or else section," Temperance replied.

"I'll punch you in the face until you get a black eye!"

"Well there goes my martial arts monthly front page."

"Do you think this is a joke!?"

"No, I think you are."

It took fifteen officers to hold Tetsutetsu back.

Click!

"Come on, you can tell us," Uraraka asked Animal, who shook his head. "Pretty please?" She asked with puppy eyes, which still refused to be effective. Although Animal knew Hacker was gonna take that image and black mail Dead Drop for 'alone time' with it.

Click!

"Tell me where the villains are," Shinsou asked … he got no response from Prism. "Are we sure she's there?"

"Yes. Thermal scans show that … she's using sign language."

"... Well what's she saying?"

"... She's talking about a toy car? No, a speed engine? No … a boat? Yes! I got it right!"

Shinsou sighed and left.

CLICK!

The moment Kamakiri walked in Animal screamed and attacked, needing a tranq dart in order to be taken out. "... Insectophobia?" He got sympathetic nods from 1-A students.

CLICK!

“I’m not wearing a dress,” Kendo deadpanned, regardless of insistence from Prism. At some point she forgot why she was even there to begin with.

CLICK!

“Come on, talk damn it,” Shinsou asked Temperance, who raised an eyebrow.

“… What if I can get panties from Prism?” Shinsou offered, a mischievous smile stretching across his face.

Temperance blushed.

“OH MY GOD HE BLUSHED!”

“WE WON!”

CLICK!

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Sma-

Monoma grabbed Kendo’s wrist. “Stop it. If you keep slapping him, you’ll give yourself a bruise at this rate.”

“But we’re so bad at this!” she shouted. “Why the hell didn’t Vlad teach us interrogation?”

“Paragon! We got an offer from the villains!” All turned to the voice of Tokage, bursting into the cell.

“What is it?” Kendo asked.

“Prism said she would tell us where she hid her part of the villain’s password in exchange for … a picture of Deku and Bakugou kissing.”

An image rose in Kendo’s mind; Bakugou glowering at Midoriya, cheeks puffed like a hamster as he kissed him, while Midoriya looked 0.2 seconds away from passing out from fear and embarrassment.

Uraraka passed out at the mental image, Shinsou looked like he was about to vomit, Jiro laughed loudly.

“… I suggest we do not take the deal,” Kendo said out of worry.

Click, click!

Izuku groans, stopping the footage of the villain interrogations with a few clicks.

He yawns, tears gathering at the edges of his eyes. His eyes burn with all the hours of staring at the monitors, an ache he hadn't met again since he'd stopped stalking hero forums 24/7 and started training to be a hero instead.

He fumbles blindly for his cup of coffee, and instead his hand lands on Shinsou's head.

He chokes on his shriek, pulling back his hand as if it burned him. There's an apology hanging on his lips when he realizes that Shinsou is asleep.

Izuku knows how difficult it is for Shinsou to sleep, so he tries to make as little noise as possible, plugging in headphones to the computer he's using.

He frowns at the footage of the interrogations, reviewing it for the umpteenth time. There's nothing useful for him. He wonders if Kingpin had enough time to train them in how to react if they were captured.

He buries his head in his hands, exhaustion creeping over his shoulders. It's nothing new; his head often keeps him up at night with ideas and fear and endless chatter, so it would make sense it would keep him up now.

He glances at the badge sitting on the desk, shining with the light of the monitor. It's the Paragon badge.

His Paragon badge.

He doesn't know why Kendo decided to appoint him as Paragon after Iida "died". His counterpart had already proven he was much better as a villain. Why would Kendo choose him after that?

Still, he takes the badge and grips it tighter in his hands. He can't let anyone down now.

A notification on the computer snaps him out of his reverie.

"Insert Paragon Code for Superweapon Coordinates."

Izuku stands straight, flipping the badge over to see a string of

numbers. He is about to input the last number, when he decides to look around the room.

There's no one inside there except him and Shinsou, and he trusts Shinsou.

Besides, he'd told half the heroes that the system reboot would end thirty minutes later than it truly would, and the villains had taken the bait and attacked the police station based on that information. Shinsou wasn't in the misinformation group. He was in the clear.

So, he wrote in the last number.

He only let the string of numbers flash on the screen for a second, memorizing it in just that time, before closing the window wiping the data.

The door opened.

Izuku turned, pulling himself into a half-formed battle stance, before he realized who was at the door.

“Hey Bon–” Izuku said, before clapping a hand over his mouth, glancing at Shinsou’s sleeping form.

Bondo does an awkward half-nod, pushing a cup of tea into Izuku’s hands.

“For me?” Izuku whispers, looking at the cup with wide eyes. “Thank you.”

He takes a sip, wincing at how the tea is barely warm. Still, it’s a nice gesture he’s not going to reject, so he continues sipping the tea.

"How was your infirmary shift?" asks Izuku, mostly just to keep away the awkward silence rapidly descending over both of them.

Bondo lets his shoulders drop, sagging and hunching.

"Tiring?"

Bondo nods.

"I guess it must have been with all the poisoned heroes coming in suddenly. Good thing we managed to save most of them..." Izuku says, but he doesn't really mean it. He's still kicking himself for not having realized that *poisoning* was such an easy way to deal with a Big Three.

They were good fighters, but not everyone was paranoically checking their food for poison...

"Bondo? Uhm, there's something I have to ask of you. Do you–" Izuku stops himself on his tracks. Bondo is a complete stranger, he doesn't deserve to bear with Izuku's doubts and insecurities.

But he's staring at him, silently, and the awkward silence is back. Izuku panics and blurts out: "Do you think I'm fit to be a hero?"

Izuku screws his eyes shut, waiting for the answer and his palms are sweaty and his arms are tight and–

"... I don't know," answers Bondo, fidgeting with his hands. He sounds just as confused as Izuku is and maybe that's what pushes him over the edge.

Tears start falling from Izuku's eyes, trying and failing to get them out of his face. He

"I'm sorry, I just– Kingpin's just so *ruthless* and *evil* so easily and I just want to be a hero and if I'm so good at being a villain, then why should I be allowed to be a hero? It shouldn't be me– it shouldn't be me who–"

"Midoriya?"

Izuku jumped and looked behind him to see Shinsou's tired eyes, framed by his ruffled hair falling all over the place.

"Sorry! Sorry, Shinsou, did I wake you up? I just–"

"Midoriya, am I fit to be a hero?"

Izuku blinks, looking at Shinsou, the low light turning his face unreadable.

"Of– of course you are! Your quirk would be amazing to deal with hostage situations and you're already progressing so much with hand-to-hand combat and–"

"Then if I'm fit to be a hero, then why shouldn't you be?"

"It's, it's different!" Izuku stammers, but he doesn't continue because none of them know he has All Might's legacy on his shoulders and he absolutely cannot do anything to let it down–

"No it's not. Look, my counterpart killed one of the Big Three with a grenade, and was confirmed to be the Kingpin's right-hand man," started Shinsou, his voice rising in volume. "And it's even worse for me! I'm– I'm not even heroic normally. What with looking half-dead and fighting by insulting people, I'm acting like a villain already. You are made of sunshine half the time! There's no one more heroic than you."

"But Kingpin–"

"Chose to act villainous, just like you're choosing to act heroic," states Shinsou, setting a hand on Izuku's shoulder. "Besides, you keep forgetting this is a game. If Kingpin was tearing limbs and setting buildings on fire out of school, then maybe your fears would be a bit more justified."

Izuku looks at him, the determination in his eyes shining in the low light, his tears finally drying out as Shinsou's words sink in.

Maybe he shouldn't be so afraid. It's all a game, after all! Kingpin did say he was going to be the best villain he could be so they could grow as people... He'd forgotten that hadn't he?

"Thank you, Shinsou!" Izuku says, smiling wide.

A small, bashful smile appears on Shinsou's face and Izuku freezes.

He remembers... Kingpin said he was d–dating Shinsou and oh no his stomach was fluttering wasn't it?

"So uhm ah it's a, I'm," stutters Izuku, his face slowly becoming more and more red. He averts his gaze from Shinsou's puzzled expression by looking around the room, finding that Bondo was going out of the room hurriedly with something on his hand.

"Where are you going?" asks Izuku and Bondo freezes.

He stammers out "bathroom" and then he's gone.

"...I think we just scared him with our awkwardness," says Shinsou, rubbing the back of his neck.

Izuku laughs nervously, and begins to pick up the papers on his desk and shutting the computer down.

"Anyways, Midoriya? We should maybe go to sleep if we both get this

emotional out of nowhere. Our Paragon needs to be ready for tomorrow," says Shinsou, jokingly punching Midoriya's arm.

"Uh, sure, but there are a few things I wanted to review before that, so I'll go to sleep in a few–."

"Midoriya?"

"Hmm?"

A familiar numbness sets itself all over Midoriya's limbs.

"Go to your room and sleep."

Midoriya should fight this, snap out of it like he did in the Sports Festival, but he finds he doesn't want to. He's tired and walking beside Shinsou as they both go to their rooms is soothing.

Things can wait until tomorrow.

Parasite throws the camera up and down and up and down in the air, smiling sharply at the disgusted faces her teammates are making. It's pretty funny, to see them look like that!

She enters the War Room, which is basically the same old circus tent arena, but now it's got a hologram installed in the middle and a few pitchforks stabbed around for aesthetics.

She walks in to where Kingpin is, having finished some group-bonding activity Parasite sadly had to miss, and gives him the camera.

"Special delivery right from the hero base's sewers!" she says, enjoying the 'ewws' from the crowd, before she goes to escape the bright lights shining down on her.

Kingpin watches the video in his laptop, fastforwarding until he finds the coordinates. He takes the time to check them in the GPS.

"Alright everybody!" grins Kingpin, for once looking better rested. "So, it seems our earlier guess for the Superweapon's location was correct! This simplifies things a whole lot!"

A few plans and specific team formations disappear from the hologram's display, leaving the digital board significantly clearer.

"This is it! In a few more hours the Superweapon will be ours and the

game will be over!"

There are cheers and hoots and hollers, and Parasite smiles.

"Alright, everybody! We got the villain's location and our newest Paragon will be there so get moving! I'll–"

Suddenly his face went blank and he rewound the video, listening with a frown on his face as the rest of the villains sent him curious looks, but started to get up to their groups.

"Do you think I'm fit to be a hero?" he suddenly mouths, his lips curling into a soft, sad smile, before he seems to realize something, his smile turning into a grin. "Oh, thank you, both of you, for handing out your insecurities to me on a silver platter."

He stands up, his eyes far-away and unfocused, a spark of madness lighting in them.

… So that's what the girls thought about that made him hot.

"The prisoners are almost at the prison. Four minutes," reported Kamakiri, entering the conference room. "Serves the vicious bastards right."

There's a murmur of excitement in the room as the heroes chatter amongst each other, rubbing sleepy eyes and nursing cups of coffee.

"I'm surprised cops haven't reported anything. The villains lost a lot of stealth, so anything they try to get them back should be big," says Kendo

"Maybe they realized the superiority of the better ones and disposed of the pawns," Monoma spoke with a smirk. 'Disposed of class 1-A' wasn't said, but the implication was still there. "They *are* villains after all."

"It doesn't fucking fit," says Bakugou, a scowl on his face as he adjusts his boots. "They're villains but *any* Deku would wreck everything if they could save someone."

"So that means–" murmurs Kendo her eyes going wide.

"That means the villains probably have a fucking plan–"

"EVERYBODY GET TO YOUR STATIONS AND MOVE OUT

IMMEDIATELY!” sounds Midoriya’s panicked voice through the comms. “THE LOCATION OF THE SUPERWEAPON IS THE PRISON!”

“–and we played right into it.”

Chapter End Notes

Well, well, well! It seems the villains have the upper hand yet again! For how long though....
There is a bit of foreshadowing for the ending of the War in this chapter! (Which btw is already written)
I'd like to hear theories of how this is all going to end!!!

Thanks for reading! :)

Crystalquill’s Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Hidden Aces

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kamakiri watches through the car's windowpane as the prison gets closer.

It's a grey building with steel walls and fences and spikes surrounding it like the layers of an onion.

To distract himself, he starts counting the number of turrets surrounding the prison. He loses count when he's nearing the triple digits.

Still, it doesn't really matter how many defenses there are around the prison. Kamakiri's not stupid, he's realistic: the villains have completely destroyed any kind of defense put in to stop them almost from the very start.

He knows how this War is going to end. But he'll be damned if he doesn't go down fighting.

"–kiri! Kamakiri!"

He turns his head to see whoever's calling him. It turns out to be Kodai, a slight frown on her face.

"You weren't answering," she says, looking to the front of the vehicle. "I was asking if you are prepared for battle."

"Yes," Kamakiri responds, mentally checking that all his weapons are still there. "Are you?"

"I am as well," she answers.

"Isn't anybody going to ask me if I'm ready?" asks Tetsutetsu from the front of the car.

"Are you ready?" states Kodai coldly.

"HELL YEAH I AM!"

"Tetsutetsu, if I crash it's going to be your fault!" says Kendo, trying to swat at him with one of her enlarged hands.

"It doesn't matter! I am ready to crush those villains once and for all!"

"Why the sudden confidence?"

"We are finally getting a straightforward fight! They attack, we defend! No trying to guess the next ridiculous plan–"

"Did you already forget this is part of the villain's plans?" says Kamakiri, going back to watching the prison, even if he keeps the corner of his eye trained on his three teammates. "If anything, we should be on guard."

"Being on guard for too long leads to overexerting yourself," interjects Kodai, resting her head on her hand.

"We have a traitor on the team!" shouts Tetsutetsu, earning a dirty look from Kendo. "We have to be on our guard all the time! Anyone who isn't would be stupid or– wait, Kodai, are you the traitor?!?"

"What in the name of reason would lead you to believe that?" asks Kodai dumbfounded, turning to look at Tetsutetsu.

Tetsutetsu faces the passenger seats, almost vaulting over his seat to stare at Kodai. He points at her and says "The traitor would obviously try to get us to drop our guard!"

"...Kodai pointed out something that we should keep in mind to be better. If she truly was the traitor, she would probably let us get paranoid so we'd be more unfocused in the battlefield."

"Why are you defending her Kamakiri? We should be trying to find out if she's the traitor or not. Wait... are you a traitor too?!?"

Kamakiri's eyebrows raise sharply. Him, the traitor? Is Tetsutetsu serious?

"You hesitated!" Tetsutetsu shouts.

"Of course I did!" Kamakiri snaps back. "How else would I have reacted to something so ridiculous!"

"It isn't ridiculous!"

"It is!"

"It's–"

The car brakes violently.

Kamakiri is launched forward, his seatbelt digging painfully into him before gets thrown to the back of his seat. Kodai groans beside him.

"Kendo, what the hell?!?" Tetsutetsu says, after wrenching his head out of the headrest. His skin has taken on a metallic sheen, which Kamakiri supposes it explains why the headrest is bent almost ninety degrees.

"SHUT UP!" Kendo screams, turning to face all three of them. "What did I say back at the base?!?"

"Uuuuh, what part? You said a lot of things back at the base–"

"Tetsutetsu, I know you're dense but you're not dumb!" she says, pointing a finger straight at him. "I've been having to break fights up about who the traitor could be for almost ten hours straight, don't you dare start another one! Now tell me what I said back at the base!"

"...All traitor theories should be told calmly to the Paragons while they're alone and they should be backed by solid evidence. If a Paragon refuses, leave them alone."

"Good!" she snaps back, angrily sitting back down and starting the car back up. "Now please let me drive in peace!"

Kamakiri turns back to watching the window and this time the silence in the car is only broken by the growl of the engine.

Condense steps out of the car to greet the prison.

Uraraka looks around curiously from beside him, unaware of who he truly is.

He looks away. He mentally reviews his orders– well, both orders, the hero and the villain ones again.

The hero one is almost painfully simple: defend the prison until midday at all costs.

He knows it isn’t that simple.

Even though Midoriya only had a few hours of being the Paragon and

even less of knowing where the Superweapon is, he must have come up with something already.

He isn't allowed inside the planning tent, set up a few meters away from him. No one except the two Paragons, Midoriya and Kendo, and their respective second-in-commands, Bakugou and Monoma, are allowed to go in there.

So of course he snuck in a microphone into it.

He knows everything they're planning. Both villains and heroes.

The time is 6:46 am.

At 12:00 pm, the upper hand will belong to either of the two groups.

And after being part of the hero team, of working hard without breaks, of seeing his "teammates" be decimated left and right?

He knows exactly which team he wants to see win.

The grey walls of the planning tent weakly flutter in the wind, unwelcoming and absolutely *useless* to keep the fiery temperature away from them.

Inside it, Monoma grits his teeth, using all his force of will, *every single drop of it*, to keep himself from snapping at the obnoxiously arrogant blond and the nervous, stuttering, green-haired trickster arguing with him.

He knows that this idiotic back-and-forth is how both of them come up with plans and up until now those plans have been... useful. So he magnanimously restrains himself from telling the two 1-A idiots just exactly how moronic they look.

"But another cistern for Komori would give us the edge we need! We *can't* let the villains in further than the third wall ring! The spores she's producing from that water should be enough to slow the villains down considerabl–"

"Yeah, but if those fuckers kill mushroom girl, the villain mushroom girl–"

"–Parasite!"

"Parasite, whatever, *she* can use all that water to make a fuck-ton of

spores and screw us over! Why not, instead of fucking around, you let me and quirk-knockoff-jackass destroy all the roads coming to and from the base–"

"We can't just destroy government property–!"

"THIS IS A FUCKING GAME, DEKU. THERE AREN'T ANY FUCKING TAX DOLLARS GOING TO THOSE ROADS!"

"...sorry, I forgot."

Monoma rolls his eyes, turning to look at Kendo, intending to shoot a 'can you believe these guys?' look at her, only to find her making notes on a notebook.

At least most of the plans in said notebook are hers.

"You're right, Bakugou. The villains have demonstrated they can use vehicles effectively; that's a risk we can't take. Both of you, head out. Midoriya and I will fina–"

"THIS IS JIRO," comes from the comms, all four of them startling. "WE HAVE A PROBLEM. GET THE FUCK OUT OF THE TENT!"

The four of them exchange worried glances before they all burst through the wavering walls of the tent.

"What! What's wrong!" asks Kendo to Tsuburaba, standing watch. He simply points towards the distance.

Monoma squints against the harsh glare of the sun. He can't see anything except the wavering hot air making mirages on the ground.

And then he sees it. A boxy outline coming in from the distance.

His blood runs cold.

"Is– is that a tank?" he asks, but he doesn't expect an answer.

Not when another metallic machine appears out of *nothing*, crawling towards them fast, faster than any machine that size has any right to move.

And then another rises out of the horizon.

And another.

And one more.

Another one.

They keep coming.

"How is this happening?!?" shrieks Tsuburaba. "Didn't the villains have no resources?!?"

"...Fractal," whispers Midoriya, his eyes as wide as plates. "If– if the villains can create miniature, functioning versions of the tanks, then Fractal can enlarge them with her quirk!"

"Shit– how many things can she enlarge at once?" asks Kendo, her voice set in a no-nonsense tone.

"That doesn't fucking matter!" screams Bakugou.

Monoma turns to let him now *exactly* how much that comment of his is unwelcome, until he sees the savage snarl that is on his face, how his hands are already crackling with explosions and how he's licking his lips as if the tanks were the most delicious food ever created and he had been starving for months.

"What matters is how we're going to *tear them to **shreds***."

"Midoriya, Kendo head back inside. You're our strategists. We need both of you away from the fighting," says Monoma, tearing his eyes away from Bakugou to look at the two Paragons.

Midoriya looks on without seeing, probably already going through a hundred plans in a second.

Kendo has her jaw set, her head held high and nods. She looks like a general. "Good luck, both of you," she says, before tugging Midoriya by the arm and leaving for the safety of the prison proper.

Monoma turns back to the glinting wave of machinery approaching.

The tanks fire.

Explosions shred through the first wall around the prison, tearing chunks of metal from them and sending them flying.

"Monoma! Bakugou!" screams Tokage through the comms. "Come near the entrance 2E quick!"

Bakugou sprints ahead of him, the asshole, and that spurs Monoma into breaking into a sprint too.

"Where am I needed?" he screams once he gets there.

"Watch, then do it yourselves!" Tokage answers, two gaping holes where her eyes should be. A quick glance tells Monoma that her eyes are actually floating a few meters above them. "Shoji, get ready!"

Monoma watches as Kodai touches a few rocks the size of her palm and then passes them to Uraraka. She makes the rocks weightless and she passes them to Shoji until his six arms are completely full.

"Throw!" screams Tokage and Shoji obeys, throwing the rocks as hard as he can.

Midair, Kodai activates her quirk on the rocks and they grow from being as big as a fist to being as big as Monoma himself.

The rocks rain down the tanks, denting a few, knocking one over, but most of them continue unperturbed.

"Ready the next volley!" shouts Tokage.

Monoma quickly taps Kodai's hand and snags a few rocks, stuffing them in his pockets. He touches one, passes it to Bakugou.

"DIEEEEEEEEE!" he screams, launching the rock straight at the tanks. Monoma calculates the time, enlarges it, but he doesn't watch it hit. He just passes another rock to Bakugou.

His body already feels heavy, like he put on the weight of an enlarged rock over his shoulders, a side-effect of Kodai's quirk.

The tanks fire another round of bullets, shredding through the second wall.

Monoma grits his teeth.

'Midoriya, Kendo. Please,' he thinks, passing yet another rock to Bakugou. 'Come up with something. Anything! Anything to give us a fighting chance!

Shinsou waits.

And waits.

He counts the seconds.

And when the gunshots and explosions start he counts those too.

But he waits.

He's far away enough that no matter how much the villains shoot, they won't get to him.

No, his purpose is another. Midoriya entrusted him with this and he's not going to let him down.

The rocky, barren earth is hot and with midday fast approaching it's slowly getting even more unbearable. There's a dead mouse rotting nearby and the smell sometimes gets blown over to him by gusts of wind. His legs fell asleep three minutes ago and he doesn't dare move them for fear of making noise.

He still waits.

There's a countdown going on his comm, the numbers coming in at odd times.

"21"

...

"20"

...

...

...

"19, 18"

...

...

"17"

It's how many heroes are left.

That's why he waits.

And waits.

And–

There's footsteps.

He can't tell where there coming from– from the southeast. The footsteps are coming from the southeast and they're unhurried, followed by muttering as fast as the beat of a hummingbird's wings.

Bingo.

He pushes a few buttons in his mask, a microphone coming to life near Kingpin, carrying his voice to Shinsou's comm.

"–let them. Assault is near enough to Komori that the water that's being sprayed by the cistern truck would be very useful to our Parasite, once Komori has been dealt with. Also, Hacker has a clear shot for disabling the main turret with the tanks. Yes, they should–"

Shinsou activates the camera feature of his mask.

Kingpin's image flares to life on the screen, the angle from which he's being filmed switching out automatically to provide the best view; one of the few remnants of Hatsume's technology before she got killed.

"You know, Kingpin, it was awfully arrogant of you to come here alone," comes Shinsou's voice from beside Kingpin, behind an old, shriveled tree.

Kingpin pauses, opening his mouth to respond but shutting it just as quickly.

He doesn't have a mask, Shinsou realizes with a start. Nothing to cover his face. It's the first time in three days that Kingpin's showing his face openly.

Shinsou pushes another button.

"It was a gamble, wasn't it? You needed a vantage point far away from the fight that would allow you to view it entirely, but you couldn't be noticed, so you snuck away to here."

Kingpin darts over to behind the tree. He finds no one.

"You're not as unpredictable as you think you are," sounds Shinsou's voice from behind a rock a few ways over. "You're not as smart as you think you are either."

Kingpin jumps, using his quirk to leap the few feet towards the rock, breaking it in half with a well-placed kick.

"You know, it's kind of pathetic how you're breaking down without Con Man," speaks Shinsou from behind a rock wall.

Kingpin jumps, whirling around to face the noise. His fists are curled tight.

"You thought we wouldn't notice? How you *use* Con Man as your moral compass?

His green eyes dart around, to find where Con Man is hiding, looking at all the wrong directions.

"How you depend on him to not go off the deep end?"

He jumps back towards the tree, cracking it in half with a punch.

"How you burden him with a task *you* should be able to do for yourself?"

"You're talking through microphones, aren't you?" says Kingpin, scoffing, digging the device out of the tree with a fist. "I should have noticed sooner."

"You didn't notice because you were too busy trying to distract yourself from the truth," answers Shinsou, watching as Kingpin scans the area to see where the other microphones could be hiding. "Isn't that right?"

"What do you know?" spits out Kingpin, ripping another microphone out from the ground.

"Oh, I know a lot," says Shinsou, slowly crawling away from his hiding spot, getting closer to Kingpin. "I *am* the same person as Con Man after all."

Kingpin tenses up, going stock-still for a second, before frantically searching for the other microphones.

"And here's the truth: I know I would do it. I would jump for the chance to feel *needed* by someone, anyone. And for it to be you? You, who are everything I want to be but can't? I would be a fool not to."

"But... I would resent you. I would hate myself for it, I know. But I would resent you even then. You know I'm terrified of being used for

my quirk, and that? That would be a step away from it."

"Isn't this unfitting of a hero *Hitoshi*?" grits out Kingpin.

Shinsou flinches, but he swallows back the hurt, continuing to crawl nearer and nearer.

"Aren't you using all of us too? Hacker's designs and creativity, Forgery's mind and strategic planning... you use them for that, don't you? Why... why would you do that to us?"

Shinsou can't help letting his emotions bleed into his voice. His throat tightens, but he blinks through it. He has a mission, he needs to fulfill it. No matter... no matter how much it hurts.

"You made a network of people that will do *anything* for you. They care for you day and night, admire you, *love you* even. And you just use them for what they can do?"

"Stop!" Kingpin says, his voice cracking.

This time, when Shinsou speaks, it's not through a microphone.

"Is this what you meant about creating a new system? A mastermind, away from danger puppeting hundreds of heroes into doing the dirty work? *Using* them to create their vision of the world? Tricking them into following a madman?"

"I said stop!" screams Kingpin, clapping his hands over his ears and clenching his eyes shut.

Shinsou doesn't hesitate. His quirk flares to life, latching onto Kingpin's mind and taking control of it.

For a second Shinsou's breathless, watching as Kingpin's eyes go blank and unfocused.

"Kingpin, take your gun and shoot yourself with it," orders Shinsou.

Kingpin's hand mechanically grips his gun, cocks it.

It’s over, they won–

Kingpin starts grinning.

Then he laughs, once. Laughter that doesn’t belong to someone of his actions. The innocent laugh he’s heard from Deku many times coming

from a villain hurts more than he thought.

“Did you forget that little trick doesn’t exactly work on me?” he says, grinning softly. “My dear Con Man and I experimented with his quirk many times and one day … I figured out how to refuse all together.

There was a shot as Shisou felt pain in his arm and he cried out.

“And did you really think I would rescue my allies all by my lonesome?”

He turned to see Fractal, her face set in a stony mask, the barrel of her gun gently posed on the back of Shinsou’s head.

“Ha! You say that as if you hadn’t considered doing just that.” Shinsou’s grasping at straws and he knows it. The cold of the metal on his head is seeping through his skin. There has to be *something* he can say that would get him out–

No.

He isn’t getting out of this. He knows that. Izuku knew there was the possibility of it when he proposed this plan.

What he needs to do now, is make sure his sacrifice is *worth it.*

“You… you’re a liar,” Shinsou says, with hollow confidence.

“How so?” Kingpin answers, voice low and dangerous.

“Oh, not with your words,” Shinsou looks at the sky, letting the gun press harder to his neck. “But with your actions.”

Shinsou closes his eyes. Breathes in, shuts his mind up and lets lets his mouth do the talking in his stead.

“You know you shouldn’t be leading them at all. If you can’t even pull yourself back from your darker side, how will you make sure none of them will end up falling for good?”

Shinsou opens his eyes, stares straight ahead at Kingpin’s own.

“And you haven’t told any of them that, have you?”

“You’re the most unheroic person I’ve ever met in my life,” spits out Kingpin, but the wobble in his voice clearly betrays he’s saying a bare-faced lie. He’s always been a terrible liar.

That doesn't mean the words don't hurt like someone's tearing his heart out of his chest.

Bang!

The cold hits his head. He falls forward, stumbling before he hits the ground.

Dirt flies into his mouth and a dull throb starts at the back of his head.

"Wait there until we come to retrieve you," speaks Ectoplasm's voice through his comm.

Shinsou punches the ground once, dries a tear out of his face and pretends it was from the dirt that got in his eyes.

He doesn't look up as Fractal and Kingpin walk forward, getting closer to a rock formation that will let them see the whole battlefield at once, and leave him behind.

He only looks once he hears Ectoplasm's footsteps behind him.

Fractal was looking away.

And he sees Kingpin's face, only for a second.

While she watched the battlefield, Kingpin's face betrayed him.

He looked as if he was going to shatter.

As Shinsou took the hand Ectoplasm offered him, he knew.

He'd succeeded.

Chapter End Notes

> I'm so excited!!! I'd had the scene of the tanks nearing the prison stuck in my head for *weeks* and now it can see the light! Thanks for reading, and thanks for sticking almost to the very end!!!

Over the Edge

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ochako trips, barely managing to catch herself on the ground. Her hair sticks to her face, damp with sweat and she reaches to unstick it, but halfway she clamps her hand on her mouth, choking back the wave of nausea that hits her. She clenches her eyes, the sounds of her teammate's worried questions clanging inside her head.

A boom roars in the distance. She opens her eyes just a crack to look.

"Our last turret's down! We have no artillery assistance from the prison!" screams Tokage, her swamp-colored hair framing the two holes where her eyes should be like vines around a dark cave.

Ochako shuts her eyes again, sending her vision back into darkness.

"What the– the tanks all shrunk!"

She looks up and Ochako can't believe her own eyes as the tanks go from being twice her height to as small as toys. Kodai narrows her eyes, trying to understand why her villainous counterpart would release her quirk just now.

"Everyone, retreat!" comes Kendo's voice through the comms. "We'll hold down the prison from inside!"

Ochako feels arms wrap around her and gently lift her up. She swallows down a bit of vomit at being jostled, but she's still grateful for being carried by Shoji because she wouldn't be able to walk straight on her own.

"We'll go right away," answers Shoji, settling Ochako on his back.

"Don't! It's a fucking trap!" growls Bakugou, stuffing his comm into one of his pockets angrily. "That's not part of the fucking plan, they've hacked the comms again!"

“Shit,” hisses Tokage, detaching her ear with the comm still in it. “Muffle all of your comms now! We can’t let the villains hear what

we're doing through the microphones!"

Ochako reaches for her own comm and stuffs it in her pocket. She closes her eyes, zeroing on her breathing, running through a breathing exercise to keep her nausea at bay.

Breathe in.

"If the villains called everyone inside, there must be a reason, " says Monoma, breaking the sudden stillness, his words being carried by the musty air. "They're going to do something big outside."

Breathe out.

"No shit, Sherlock. The villains think they've won, of course they're going to want to make a grand fucking entrance."

Breathe in.

"They haven't won *yet* ," corrects Tokage, tapping a frantic rhythm with her foot.

Breathe out.

"Then that just means they'll probably do something extra to make sure they are fucking *going to win* ."

Breathe in.

A rumble starts in the distance.

"...How many of us are left?" snaps Shoji, his voice as cutting as a blade.

Breathe out.

The rumbling gets slightly louder.

"Uuuuh, sixteen heroes. It's only us six outside though," replies Tokage. "Why?"

"Look behind you."

Ochako blinks her eyes open, squinting against the glare.

She sees nothing on the ground, but then she lets her eyes look up at the blue sky and sees a tiny black speck getting bigger and bigger.

“Is that a *helicopter?!?”* asks Monoma, his eyes as wide as satellite dishes. “When did they have the time to do that?!?”

“Fucking Fractal and Hacker, that’s how!” growls Bakugou, his eyes trained on the helicopter like a tiger’s on his prey. “And that doesn’t matter! I’ll knock that shit out of the sky!”

Ochako’s eyes narrow. “ *We’ll* knock that shit out of the sky,” she says, lightly punching Shoji to make him set her on the ground.

She looks at their raised eyebrows , either because she cursed or maybe because she was almost passing out from nausea before. She still is, but she’s going to give her best in this exercise because if she can’t smile in spite of everything, just like Deku does, then she can’t call herself a true hero!

“Here’s the plan. Tokage, Shoji, Bakugou and I stay outside. Kodai and Monoma go inside to warn everybody about the hacked comms and protect the password terminal.”

“Why would I listen to a 1-A scum like you?!?” snaps Monoma, his eyes shining like those of a mad dog.

“Because you are too valuable right now,” answers Ochako as if she’d just said that the sky is blue. “We need you to guard the Superweapon’s cell.”

Monoma blinks, his deranged smile freezing on his face. Then, it widens, probably to start another tirade about how 1-A is *finally* recognizing 1-B's superiority, but Kodai has had enough and starts tugging Monoma inside by the tie of his hero costume, choking him in the process.

“Alright, so. Tokage, can you calculate a clear path to the underside of the helicopter?” asks Ochako, wasting no time.

“Yeah? What for?” she says, detaching her eyes once again and sending them up towards the sky.

“Shoji, Bakugou. How about a little target practice?” cheerfully asks Ochako, her smile widening as the two of them realize *exactly* what that means.

Without saying anything else, Shoji and Bakugou share a look, nod and Shoji picks Bakugou up like the world’s most volatile rugby ball.

Ochako touches Bakugou's foot with her hand, activating her quirk. The wave of nausea hits her and her vision wavers black for a second, but she holds on to her power like she's hanging from the side of a cliff.

"Ready!" calls Tokage, hand clamped firmly on a metal railing.

"Set!"

"Fire!"

Shoji throws Bakugou with all his strength, making the explosive blond an orange-black-yellow blur, passing below the helicopter…

Until Bakugou uses his quirk to shoot up, slamming into the underside helicopter.

The helicopter swerves wildly, bucking like a wild horse.

Bakugou takes the opportunity to use his quirk one more time and hangs on to the helicopter's railing.

Ochako's vision goes grainy white, then black, like a bad tv channel, before tuning back in to find herself being propped up by Shoji and–

Is that Kingpin in the helicopter?!?

She watches, open-mouthed as Kingpin and Bakugou fight, the first sending gunshots and superpowered punches to try and dislodge Bakugou, who gives just as much pain back.

It's a painful tie that breaks when Kingpin kicks one of Bakugou's hands straight up by mistake.

A blast bursts out of the blond's hand, ripping a few of the helicopter's blades off. The helicopter starts lurching, this time like a paper bag in a hurricane, heading straight down–

Bakugou tackles Kingpin out of the helicopter, sending them both hurtling to the ground–

And the helicopter continues crashing *towards the prison.*

Kendo curses beside Izuku, watching over the camera's of the prison's control room.

The screens that cover the room wall to wall all show the spiralling descent of the helicopter.

For a second, Izuku's blood goes cold, because Fractal is still inside the helicopter, only to sigh in relief when she jumps out at the last second, using her own quirk to enlarge a delta wing in her pocket–

Which she uses to fly straight at them.

"Kendo! We have to get out of here!" says Izuku, quickly stuffing his own comm into his pocket to muffle it, jumping out of the seat.

She nods, grabbing a walkie talkie from her table and turning it on. The walkie-talkie's their backup plan in case the comms were hacked again and now they're coming in handy.

"Attention all team leaders, the Paragons are leaving Central Command. I repeat, the Paragons are leaving Central Command, over."

Izuku only pays her half attention as he checks Kacchan's position for the last time, double-checking things are going according to plan. It seems like they are, but he can never be sure.

As he springs out the door, he takes out his own walkie-talkie and asks "All team leaders, please report your status! Over."

"Shoji speaking. I'm manually closing all of the prison's gates from the outside. Uraraka is out of commission, Tokage is taking her inside. Over."

"What do you think you're doing?!?" screeches Kendo into the device. "If you're closing the gates, you'll get stuck outside! The villains–"

"–Will get inside unless I do this. Jamming the doors will leave the helicopter crash site as the only entry point to worry about. I'll buy enough time for the Superweapon. That's the best I can do."

"...Understood, over" relents Kendo, gritting her teeth before enlarging her fist to punch a door open.

Izuku tries to ignore the sinking feeling in his chest, telling himself that this is just a game. In a real mission, he'd never let Shoji sacrifice himself. He knows that. Don't forget it. *Don't forget it.*

"This is Honenuki– shit. Wait a second. STOP HER! DID NONE OF

YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID ABOUT CLOSING THE GODDAMN DOOR!?! Okay, I'm back. The helicopter struck near the villain prisoner's cells and it was enough to break some of them open. Those fuckers escaped and they're the ones who know the password *and are inside the prison.* We need backup! Over."

"I'll send Tokage to you, over" says Kendo and she gestures at Izuku. He fumbles with his walkie-talkie but soon he has Tokage on the line.

"Then make it fast because even with Monoma and Kodai, we're losing them! They definitely memorized the layout of the prison at some point because they know exactly where to go– Bondo? What are you doing– WHAT THE FUCK!" And then there was nothing but static on the other end.

Kendo cursed, switching the channels. "Bondo! Bondo, what happened!"

"...Tried to glue Prism to the floor, but she dodged and I got Honenuki instead. I have to go–" And then also static.

"Damn it!" she said, before breathing deeply. "Midoriya, you have my permission to try out your plan. I'll go stop the villains from getting to the terminal–"

"But Kendo–"

"No buts!" she said, quickly karate-chopping Izuku's head. "You're in no condition to fight due to your quirk. Your mind is the most valuable thing you have right now."

"But what about you?" Izuku asks, his voice breaking. "You're a Paragon too, you can't–"

"We don't lose the game by losing Paragons, Midoriya. But *they* lose if the Kingpin is gone," she says, cracking her knuckles. "I'll hold down the fort. It doesn't matter if I die, *win this shit, Midoriya.* "

She then runs down the corridor, leaving Midoriya with nothing but a silent walkie-talkie, a half-baked plan and the expectations of the entire hero team on his shoulders.

Koji, also known as Animal, had mixed feelings at the moment. On one hand, there weren't a lot of animals around, meaning they wouldn't be in danger from enemy fire. On the other hand, there

weren't a lot of animals around, meaning he was in danger from enemy fire!

He was using snakes and rats nearby with a small transmitter in order to sneak-attack the hero version of the Nightmare Duo with mixed results. It was tricky to find a good opening in a steel corridor while he was hidden in an adjacent corridor with only the visuals from his animals' cameras to guide him.

Besides, the bird-shaped image scared a lot of the critters into leaving. The ones that remained were either fighting the villains … or each other. "Mr Snakes, please stop eating the mice!"

"This is Temperance, I took down Kendo!"

That alert made him smile. This was it, they were winning! He took a glance at the villains– and met Tokoyami's eyes straight on. Animal's smile froze on his face.

"I found Anima!" Tokoyami shouted, Dark Shadow rearing back in preparation for a strike.

Kuroiro looked around before seeing Animal himself. "Wow, even when noticed he keeps a smile and calm demeanor. That's kinda creepy."

'AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!' Animal screamed in his head, sweating slightly.

There was a thump and the heroes turned to see the 'corpse' of Kendo laying on the ground, Temperance grinning from above. She was almost literally dripping red, so much so that Animal knew that Temperance had knocked her out and then took his time decorating her.

Animal sighed with relief. Oh thank god, he had back-up now! He didn't have to worry about Toko– Tokoyami was losing control.

"Kendo … no … NO! DARK SHADOW, STOP!" It didn't matter that Kendo was just unconscious, Kuroiro's Black quirk coupled with Tokoyami's own emotions at the very realistic and gruesome "corpse" was enough to send Dark Shadow on a rampage, tearing the ground like a hot knife through butter–

Coming straight for Animal.

Animal was close to screaming externally before a dart went into Tokoyami's neck.

"Sorry, you fell into the trap we planned," said a floating gun, obviously Prism. She then fired at Kuroiro, hitting him in his leg.

Animal took no chances and ordered one of the rats to drive a dart right into Kuroiro's neck.

Without bothering to dispose of the corpses, they walk over to the terminal, apprehension, fear and excitement all mixed in as they enter their portion of the code, turning out to be a decoder for the final password. It was only a matter of seconds to input the other parts of the password that then the decoder took and transformed into–

"Isn't that a birthday date?" asks Temperance, frowning at the terminal.

"If it is, that person must be ancient!" answers Prism as she hits enter. "But that's not important. Say hello to our Superwea– huh?"

The nearby wall falls apart to reveal a bare metal room with a few empty plates of half-eaten takoyaki spread around it. Sitting criss-cross applesauce was an old short man with a yellow costume and a confused look on his face…Is he supposed to be a Pro?

He would have thought of it as a joke before a scream was heard. Weird, he could've sworn it was Izuku's voice, but too feminine. Was he watching through the cameras? Was this guy really so scary?

"Is this where I buy the fish pops?" he asks the villains, wiping drool off his chin absentmindedly.

"Um… no, we're here to stop the heroes?" Temperance asks cautiously.

"Right, right, don't worry. I'll take out Miss Talker," he says as he hops off the cot, cracking his back *loudly*. "Huh. Never would've thought the villains would manage to get to me first."

Before any of them could blink, he vanished in a violent burst of air.

"... Why do I feel really confident?" Animal asks.

Kingpin crash-lands near the heart of the prison-turned-hero-fortress with a shout, Bakugou's snarls coming from a few meters off.

He has barely enough time to stand up before Bakugou is on him, fighting like a rabid dog. Kingpin kicks him in the stomach and grits his teeth with annoyance.

His team is invading the prison and if the helicopter struck in the right place, the three villain "prisoners" should be out of their cells and getting their hands on the Superweapon soon enough. If Bakugou wants to fight instead of going to deal with the reason he's going to lose the War, fine by him.

With a graceful dodge, Kingpin tricks Bakugou into firing at one of the metal walls nearby, the clang reverberating through the narrow alleyway they are fighting in. He uses the distraction to rip a metal pipe off the wall and throw it at Bakugou's face with deadly precision.

Bakugou dodges the pipe, but not the kick to his ribs, making him stumble and fall. Bakugou has a split-second to roll to the side to avoid being stomped in his face, Kingpin's kick creating a small crater where it struck the ground.

With a small explosion he launches himself as far away from Kingpin as he can, his teeth grit in concentration.

Kingpin huffs and jumps after him, easily following his movements. Bakugou's costume is brightly colored, even as dirty and tattered as it is.

Bakugou finally goes on the offensive, bouncing off a hollow metal wall to swipe at Kingpin with a glowing fist. Kingpin simply slaps it away, reaching out with his own hand towards Bakugou's face. Bakugou retaliates with a kick to his stomach before Kingpin's hand can close.

The kick is barely felt through Kingpin's armor but it forces him to jump back in order to safely land in a crouch.

Bakugou touches ground in front of him as well, standing tall with a strangely calm look on his face. Kingpin narrows his eyes at him.

“So you finally show your face,” states Bakugou, shaking his hands as if to loosen them. “Good. Got nothing to hide your face behind like a *rat.* ”

“And yet you still wear your superiority complex for everyone to see,” counters Kingpin, using the time Bakugou’s giving him by monologuing to listen in on his team’s progress because he isn’t

stupid.

“Oh shut the fuck up. As if this whole act isn’t turning your brain to *shit!”*

“Tch,” spits out Kingpin, glaring at Bakugou. “I–”

“Manchester Smash!” Kingpin has only a second of surprise before he's tackled to the ground, his face mercilessly squashed on the cold metal floor. With a jerk he sends whoever's on top of him sprawling, just in time for the sky to turn grey with a clang.

He's been boxed in, trapped in a metal dome, and he wants to kick himself for allowing his enemies to take him by surprise. It doesn't matter anyways. He'll be able to break out soon enough–

Kingpin dodges on instinct, a fist flying millimeters away from his face.

" *Now* you're going down you fucker," grins Bakugou, settling himself into a fighting stance, his red eyes shining with feral glee. Beside him, Deku recovers from his failed punch, a shaky All Might smile on his face, his eyes glinting in the almost-dark.

"So this was your plan all along?" laughs Kingpin, throwing his arms out to gesture at the ridiculous dome, a single lightbulb on a side to provide them with light. "To trap me in a one versus two battle? You are aware my punches can break through steel, right?"

"Not this steel!" proudly declares Deku, his green eyes now shining like lanterns. "This is the same type of wall used in I-Island! Not even All Might could break through these!"

“Now that I think about it isn’t that quirkless chick close to you?” Bakugou asks Deku, a wicked smirk on his face.

“Wha– what are you talking about?” Deku asks shakily, glancing

“Come on, Kingpin has an entire harem and you’re telling me you didn’t do anything in that room?”

“It’s not like that!” He responds with a blush. “And besides, what about your ‘Bakusquad’ anyway?”

“Leave them out of this fucker!”

“I mean it kinda sounds like you’re the–”

Kingpin forces his face to look worried even as he's gleefully giggling at their naïvety on the inside. He broke through an I-Island wall before, he can do it again. He just needs a moment to pull it off.

Although... their casual interactions with each other made him grit his teeth. He clears his throat pointedly and just as both of them turn to face him he fires his gun at them. “Heartwarming camaraderie, really,” drawls Kingpin with an unamused face.

“And it will be the end of you!” Deku pounces towards him, a kick directed towards his head that gets blocked, only for Bakugou to follow up with a blast of his own.

The downsides on not having his mask on make themselves known to Kingpin as he coughs and jumps away to try and clear his eyes of smoke, lightly tapping the side of his head so his black metal mouthguard can deploy. Then an idea comes to his mind. With a second tap his visor covers his eyes, see-through and tinted green.

With single-minded determination, Kingpin dodges blows both of his attackers rain down on him, waiting, waiting... and then he gets his chance.

With a clear path to the room's light-source, he unfurls a tendril of darkness from his arm, striking the light out from the room.

Kingpin's visor automatically transitions to night-vision. His opponents are sunk into the dark.

The battle continues.

Kingpin uses his advantage in sight to use the walls as springboards, turning the fight into a pinball match with him as the ball.

The heroes only have the flashes of Bakugou's light to go by, snapshots of movement to try and predict where Kingpin is going to strike next. Yet, they move in perfect synch. (A twinge of regret-anger-hurt flashes through Kingpin's gut before he mercilessly shoves it down.)

Their movements slow down bit by bit, tired by the constant barrage of unpredictable strikes.

Kingpin gets his chance.

He shoots a blast of compressed air in Bakugou’s direction, knocking him back, using tendrils to hold Deku dow–

His words fell into the walls of his room at the Hero Headquarters. They were nothing but a nervous repetition of what he was going to tell All Might, of what he was going to say to convince him to–

His fingers itched for a pen. He lunged for it, fumbling for it in the dark, careful not to wake any of his roommates.

Writing is as natural as breathing to him, spilling out his thoughts into paper and slowly but surely polishing his words into the best they could be.

He sighed with relief as he looked it over one last time, mumbling bits and pieces of the letter out loud ...

"All Might, I can't do this anymore … please, give One for All to Mirio... He knows what to do, he's smart, strong and held up heroics better than anyone … he's worthy.

I'm not."

Izuku capped his pen, slipping the paper he'd used to write inside his backpack to keep it safe. He didn't know what would happen to him after Mirio got One for All, but that wasn't important. He was doing the right thing and that's all that matters.

Kingpin breathed deep, looking at Deku with rage. "... You… you're going to give it up! Over *this?!?* We've been through so much to let it all go to waste–!

"NO!" Deku screams, his voice reverberating through the metal walls. "Don't you understand that someone without a heroic heart shouldn't have One for All?!?"

"What the fuck are you maniacs talking about–"

"Which we have!" protests Kingpin, holding his head up high. "Just because I don't manifest it in the way society thinks I *should*– "

"I'm not talking about that…" gravely states Deku with the solemnity of a funeral speech. "We need someone else to be a moral compass just to resemble a normal person."

"Who– How–" stutters Kingpin, taking a step back.

"I'm *you* remember?" explains Deku, staring at Kingpin as if he was the hangman tasked with his execution. "I would have figured it out eventually. Who do you think told Shinsou what to talk about before

you killed him… and yours sacrificed himself because what? You were a better person than him? You would win? No, because he was a better person than you! And now you're falling apart without him!"

"Shut up," growled Kingpin, black tendrils blooming all over his body, crawling and reaching out like the hands of the damned.

"We shouldn't have One for All if we can't keep ourselves together," Deku closes his eyes, a pained expression coming onto his face, as if every word tore his throat open. " *We don't deserve it."*

"SHUT UP!" Kingpin launched a blast of air, propelling himself to throw Deku against the metal dome. "SHUT UP!" Another blast. "SHUT UP SHUT UP SHUT UP!" Blast after blast shot at the struggling Deku, each impact making the metal clang like a bell. "This isn't how it was supposed to go! You were supposed to learn that bad guys are smart and deceitful! That you need to match the–"

He nearly missed it, the sound of an explosion. His blood froze in his veins.

He turned to see Bakugou rush at him, a wild snarl on his face. He prepared until he felt the rush of a oh so familiar wind and he was kicked to the other side of the dome.

Deku was coming at him … both sides flanked. He coiled up his tendrils and formed a two-sided barrier with his shield.

"Atomic …" Bakugou prepped his gauntlet, hand on the pin.

"Idaho …" Deku winded up a kick, energy trailing with red lines as his metal boot shone in the light above them.

"SMASH!" White was all he saw, ringing was all he heard and pain was all he felt.

Izuku pants, his legs shaking from exhaustion, but he refuses to relax until he hears the announcement that the heroes have won, until he is sure Kingpin got "taken out" by the blast.

He raises his walkie talkie to his mouth, something which feels just as tiring as lifting All Might for the first time.

"St– status report," grits out Izuku through huffs, watching with the corner of his eye as Bakugou wipes sweat from his forehead.

"I'm the only one left," says Bondo with a quiet voice, his steps on metal reverberating through the call. "But don't worry. I'll help make sure the enemy doesn't get away."

Izuku swallows.

The rubble in front of him shifts.

He only has the time to throw his arms up to protect his face before it explodes outward.

Kingpin rises from the rubble, a cracked dark shield posed in front of him, no doubt the reason he survived such an explosion. His face is soot-stained, his clothes ripped in multiple places and there's a feral glint in his eyes, for all the smile in his face is kind and delicate.

Izuku throws a look at Bakugou. He understands in a second, retrieving a detonator from inside one of his boots. It's their last plan. It's the end of the line.

"Goodbye fucker," tiredly snaps Bakugou, before pressing the button.

There's no flashing lights. No dramatic countdown. No automated voice through the prison's speakers.

"KINGPIN GET OUT OF THERE!" screams Hacker's voice, loud enough that Deku can hear her through Kingpin's comm. "THE WHOLE PRISON IS RIGGED TO BLOW."

Bakugou surges forward to try and wrestle Kingpin into the ground, to try and stave him off long enough to get caught in the blast radius.

Izuku immediately turns around and heads the other way, narrowly dodging Gran Torino as he barrels into Bakugou.

There's nothing else left in his plan other than to *run* , and Izuku does, infusing his body with One for All until he's streaking away from the villains and his bones are creaking from the power, one fraction of a percent away from breaking even more than they were.

Bakugou won't last long against Kingpin *and* Gran Torino, so Izuku has to make the best of the time he bought with his sacrifice. It all rests on Izuku outrunning the blast on time, on not being killed before Kingpin. The heroes fail if all of them die, but the villains fail if the Kingpin dies.

Good thing that one of the first things he'd learnt to do is how to run away from explosions.

Kingpin runs, grinning with breathless energy as he realizes he's *won* . He'd managed to keep it together for long enough to pull this off!

He cheers, flashing a smile to Bondo running beside him. They're almost at the edge of the blast radius, only climbing a few more meters and they'd be safe. Kingpin could go faster but he wants to make sure Bondo makes it up the slope they're climbing.

He peeks back at the prison, Bakugou looking back at him with an intense expression as he's led away from the game by one of Ectoplasm's clones.

He can feel the guilt begin to climb up his throat now that he isn't in the game. Thousands of little moments where he mowed down the heroes instead of trying to set up situations to teach them. Brushing off his classmates, his *datemate's* concerns instead of listening to them as he'd said he would. *Killing Powerhouse* –

Kingpin stumbles, his hands cushioning his fall just in time. He tries to stand up and keep running, only to fall again.

He looks towards his foot. It's stuck in–

Glue.

What?

His veins begin freezing once what happened clicks in his head.

He raises his gaze to see Bondo running ahead of him, a streak of leftover glue slowly dripping from his maw.

He's– A betrayal?– But why– He is a villain, no matter that he pretended to be a hero– It doesn't– it doesn't–

He can't keep thinking about this, the base is going to blow up and they have no idea when.

With a sharp kick he rips his foot free, leaping towards Bondo, leaping forwards to try and ask him what the hell he is doing when Bondo stops in his tracks and turns back. A black shield clumsily deploys from his wrist and Kingpin recognizes it.

That's *his shield* in Bondo's hands. *He stole it.*

"Why?" is the only thing that comes out of Kingpin's mouth.

"Because you went too far and we both know it," calmly answers Bondo. "You broke your promise to teach the heroes and instead mowed them down in the name of victory."

Kingpin's eyes widen, his fists tightening and shaking. "No," he growls, green lightning sparking through his skin, his eyes lighting up like radioactive waste.

"NO! EVERYONE IS DEPENDING ON ME!" The glue keeping him stuck to the floor cracks like glass. "I WON'T LET ONE LITTLE MISCALCULATION RUIN EVERYTHING!"

Forcing himself to go beyond, the cement under his feet cracking with his bones as he tackles Bondo down, wrestling the shield out of his hands. Instead the shield goes flying.

"KINGPIN! IT'S GOING TO BLOW!" screams Hacker through his comm.

Bondo throws Kingpin off, turning to run, but Kingpin wordlessly screams and dives behind him.

And then the base blows, blasting them backwards, making him crash into the ground with painful strength. He can hear the *crack!* of his nose, as loud as the roar of fire in front of him. His back is pelted with the fake granite of the street hard enough to bruise before he falls to the ground, his ears ringing from the explosion.

It takes a few seconds for him to get his bearings, slowly incorporating himself. He looks up to see Bondo, painted black and red from the blast, out cold from being used as a meat shield. Kingpin looks down at himself, not even a single speck of red on him.

" *VILLAIN TEAM WINS!"*

Kingpin whips his head around to stare at the smoldering ruins of the prison, reduced to a smoking mess of metal and rubble. There are already a few of Ectoplasm's clones swarming the area, digging out Deku's and Bakugou's unconscious bodies.

"YOU LIAR!"

He manages to turn his head before Tank grabs the collar of his armor and lifts him off the ground, Kingpin's feet dangling in the air. Kingpin watches with terrified detachment as Tank snarls at him, his face hardening, turning his enraged expression into a bladed weapon.

"YOU SAID YOU WEREN'T– YOU– DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU WERE SORRY ABOUT WHAT YOU DID TO POWERHOUSE?!?" screams Tank into Kingpin's face, his straight hair hardening around his face like the mane of a lion. "AND YOU KILLED ANOTHER ONE OF US!"

"He– he was going to kill me–"

"AND YOUR SHIELD WAS *RIGHT THERE* !" spits Tank to his face, and with a sinking stomach Kingpin realizes he's right. "YOU COULD HAVE BOTH SURVIVED AND HEARD WHAT HE WANTED TO SAY!"

Kingpin tries to open his mouth but nothing comes out. Tears have started silently streaking down his face.

Tank grits his teeth and lets Kingpin drop to the ground. Kingpin doesn't catch himself in time, stumbling before he falls to his knees.

His hands start shaking.

In that moment, hands on the ground, he's back there– the Nomu laying on the ground with blood pooling around him–

"You see? For all your talk of hope, for all your strength of conviction… you still became the monster in this story…. Just like the society that made you," calmly explains All for One, softly setting his hand on Kingpin's hair as if to comfort him.

Kingpin flinches, snapping out of the memory.

He raises his head. He can see everybody in his team, every villain looking in his direction. Anger, fear, disappointment, confusion, hatred, he can see every emotion mixed into the faces and eyes of his team.

And even though he won, he feels as if he shouldn't have.

"If you are the hero, then who truly needs villains here?"

Chapter End Notes

Well! Only chapter missing right now is the epilogue.

Hope you all enjoyed the ending! Both of us agonized over for sooooo looooong. Special thanks to RogueDruid for letting Hazard and I (Crystalquill) do a fanfic of his fanfic, and especially for the quote at the end of this chapter!

I can't wait to hear all of your thoughts!!!!!

Crystalquill's Discord server https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

Final Bow

Chapter by Crystalquill

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Play all files?

Yes **No**

Loading files...

"–and I'll record these counseling sessions for future reference. Is that alright?" asks Hound Dog from outside the frame, a clipboard in his hands. “So Powerhouse, are you angry right now?”

"THAT MOTHERFUCKER KILLED ME OF COURSE I'M FUCKING PISSED!"

Powerhouse throws the chair across the room and it lands with a thundering crash so loud the audio shorts out for a second.

Explosions fill the frame as Powerhouse screams at the ceiling.

"When you're done, please tell me."

"If you keep up that condescending shit I'LL BLAST YOU TO–"

The video suddenly goes on fast forward, multiple minutes erratically flying by as Powerhouse blows up everything and anything in his path while screaming at the top of his lungs.

Eventually, the explosions get smaller and smaller and he drags the chair back to its original position in front of the camera. He sits down, rubbing his wrists with a grimace.

"So, Powerhouse. You're angry at Kingpin for...?"

"Killing me."

"And?"

"Generally existing?"

"And?"

"What the fuck more do you want for me?"

"Hmmm. Let's try something else. What is the moment where you were most angry at Kingpin?"

"When I woke up in the viewing room after being killed."

"Why?"

"WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU MEAN WHY? THAT WORTHLESS PIECE OF SHIT TRICKED ME INTO SETTING MYSELF UP FOR EXPULSION!"

"Powerhouse, you aren't being expelled."

"YOU THINK I'M GOING TO FALL FOR THAT BULLSHIT?!?"

"UA doesn't have the jurisdiction to expel you over something that happened before you were a student. If anything, it could expel you for using your quirk recklessly in a room full of dangerous explosives–"

"What the fuck WAS I JUST SAYI—"

"But the Principals decided not to."

"... HAAAAA?"

"UA is giving you a second chance to prove you can be a hero. Letting yourself get swept away by your own emotions is something you won't be able to afford in the field."

"What the hell are you trying to get at?"

"The first step is at least acknowledging and *communicating* the issues you have with Kingpin without resorting to violence. You need to prove you can be *better* , understand?"

“...”

“Powerhouse?”

"...Tch, fine."

There is only audio, only sound and darkness.

There are only almost imperceptible footsteps and the rustling of clothing. The creaking of wood.

Then the soft murmuring of voices, progressively getting louder and louder until–

"–sure of it. I… the way I acted in the War… I let myself go too much."

"Kingpin–"

"No, Hitoshi– sorry, Con Man." The rustling of clothes. "I am sure. I'm not breaking up with you, any of you, but… I think you three deserve someone who can stand beside you on his own."

"So you're taking a break from us? Just like that?"

"Forgery… I need to be able to keep myself sane, to balance both my hero and villain side on my own. I–"

He cuts himself off, choking down a sob.

"I– need to be able to say with certainty I'm not with *any* of you, just so I can use your abilities. I need to at *least* be able to ask for help when I'm struggling before I can say our relationship is a healthy one."

There is silence for a few seconds, muffled fidgeting and whispers being the only thing that breaks it, until–

"Fine!"

"Hacker?"

"Fine! Let's– let's take a break, but with one condition you broccoli head."

"What is it?"

"Let us help you!" she says, but her voice wavers. "It doesn't matter if it's as friends or as your datemates, let us help you."

“Don’t try to do this alone,” shakily says Con Man.

“Yes, I–” and then he devolves into sobs. “What did I do to deserve all of you?”

“Exist,” tearfully says Forgery.

The footsteps return, this time going away from the voices, the sobs and soft words soon becoming intelligible until they can’t be understood anymore.

The footage is grainy, taken from above. Most likely a security camera.

The training ground was empty. Quiet.

And then a kick opened the training ground’s door with a bang, Bakugou stomping in through it while dragging a struggling Midoriya by the hair. With a murderous growl, he throws Midoriya to the middle of the room.

Midoriya haphazardly stands up, rubbing his head. “What are you doing Ka–!”

“WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS?!?” he screams, waving a slightly burned paper in front of Midoriya’s face.

Midoriya looks confused for a second, before he recognizes the letter in Bakugou’s hands. The fear that invades his features makes him look like a sheet of paper in a thunderstorm: white, trembling and dripping. “It’s– it was nothing! It’s just a letter I–”

“A FUCKING LETTER TELLING ALL MIGHT TO TAKE THE POWER HE GAVE *YOU* AND GIVE IT TO TIN TIN RIPOFF!”

Midoriya winces, raising his hands to guard his face instinctively. “I didn’t– This wasn’t the way I wanted you to find out about One for All.”

“TOO FUCKING LATE!” Bakugou roars, burning the letter in his hand. He prowls over to Midoriya, harshly picking him up by his shirt collar and lifting him up the ground. “FOR *YEARS* YOU WERE A PEBBLE IN MY WAY AND *NOW* THAT YOU’VE BECOME SOMEONE WORTH CALLING MY RIVAL, YOU WANT TO GIVE IT UP?!?”

As if Bakugou had hit the pause button on life, Midoriya freezes, staring wide-eyed at Bakugou.

“I DON’T GIVE A FUCKING SHIT ABOUT WHAT KINGPIN HAS DONE, YOU’RE NOT HIM! YOU’RE NOT ALLOWED TO GIVE UP ONE FOR ALL *OR* GIVE UP BEING A HERO, SO SUCK IT UP!”

Bakugou unceremoniously dropped him on the floor before his barrage of attacks knocked Midoriya into a wall.

Bakugou clicked his tongue. “You better not think about giving up again or I’ll beat that mindset out of you, *Deku* ,” he said and stormed away, leaving Izuku alone.

“...that was quite the spectacle,” said Toshinori Yagi, entering the camera’s field of view.

Midoriya jumps, whirling around to face his mentor with a guilty expression and a soot-stained face. “All– All Might! I’m so sorry, I don’t–”

“My boy, I only need to know the answer to one thing right now,” interrupts All Might with a serious expression. “Were you serious about giving up being a hero?”

“No!” Midoriya is quick to say, shaking his head furiously. “No, what I thought– well, considered, was giving One for All to Mirio.”

Toshinori remains silent, waiting for Midoriya to elaborate.

“It’s just that he clearly is more fit for One for All than I am and… and after watching what Kingpin did, what *I* could do, I started to doubt if I’m the right one for One for All.”

“Sit with me,” offers Toshinori and carefully lowers himself to sit cross-legged on the training ground floor. Midoriya, after a moment of hesitation, imitates him. Silence stretches between them, Toshinori searching for the words to say.

“I don’t want my successor to be All Might’s second coming,” begins Toshinori, startling Midoriya. “I now realize that a Symbol of Peace is something unsustainable. Funny how it took an alternate version of my own successor saying it aloud to realize it.”

His smile is self-depreciating, but then shakes his head and a look of determination crosses his face. “And if you’re worried about Kingpin?

My boy, seeing Kingpin do the things he does *solidified* my decision that *you* are the best successor I could have asked for."

"Huh?!?"

Toshinori laughs, throwing his head back, before playfully poking Midoriya's forehead. "If Kingpin could pull off all those crazy stunts only using that bright mind of yours, that means *you* can also pull them off too. Imagine all of the people you could save if you applied Kingpin's skills to being a hero instead of a villain!"

Something like wonder, something like hope, something like *relief* blooms in Midoriya's face.

"And I know for a *fact* that Kingpin knows that too," says Toshinori, a satisfied tone to his voice. "Now get into your head that you *deserve* One for All, you Prince of Nonsense, and nothing will ever change my mind."

Midoriya starts crying, climbing into Toshinori's arms.

The video cuts off abruptly.

The footage suddenly starts, the angle far too convenient to be accidental. The camera was placed there on purpose. None of the room's occupants notice it's there.

The air is tense in the room.

The four of them are seated around a low table in a demented parody of a traditional tea ceremony. There are four different tea kettles, each with a different kind of tea, set on the table along with so many sweets and different pastries that they almost spill to the floor. Yet everything sits untouched.

Each of them sit at one side of the table, the two Bakugou and Powerhouse hatefully glaring at Kingpin, while Midoriya stares, frustrated, at his hands.

"So, um," begins Kingpin, sighing and running a hand through his already messy hair. "I guess, we should… talk.

Midoriya merely shook his head and turned to Kingpin. "You…" he started, but then he stopped himself, seemingly searching for the

words to say.

Kingpin didn't seem to be doing much better, awkwardly staring at Powerhouse's face.

Bakugou angrily took to taking cookies and exploding them, before throwing them with pin-point accuracy into a flower vase on the other side of the room.

"No, fuck this," suddenly growls Powerhouse, slamming his hands on the table. "Fuck all of you. I am not getting fucking expelled because you three were too chicken-shit to TALK."

"You." He points towards Deku. "You're a coward! You saw this bullshit us villains were pulling and waited to the *last fucking second* to try and actually help!"

"It was complicated, okay?" starts Deku, nervously wrenching his hands as his one of his feet starts jumping up and down under the table. "I just– I didn't want to be too much like *him* and–"

"And I was counting on it," Kingpin interrupts, placing a finger on the table as if the table was a whiteboard and his finger a marker, ready to draw his plan. "I'd already identified your aversion towards villainous stuff and presented being a mastermind as something uniquely villainous. This kept you away from command long enough to get our resource, information and communication grids up-and-running."

"And I completely fell for it, didn't I?" sighs Deku, letting his head fall on the table. "Now I just feel stupid."

" *No shit* " spits out Powerhouse,

"And when you actually tried and used it against him you developed a 'I'm just like him' mindset." Bakugou pointed out. "Actually why the hell am I here? I'm the only one that acted decently out of all you fuckers."

"Your fight with Midoriya AFTER the civil war," was said by Kingpin in a deadpan. Bakugou could only snarl in response.

"Anyway, the only reason we failed is because we expected you all to be divided that we never expected you'd pull the same shit the League of Villains does on a daily basis," Bakugou spoke, smiling cockily despite the unimpressed stares of the other three.

“But you did prepare, you even did the whole Bakusquad thing to get back at them,” Deku spoke up as Powerhouse’s eyes widened.

“Are you saying that was fucking fake!?” He nearly screams. At Bakugou’s continued grin, Powerhouse explodes into motion, and the tape is once again fast forward as a fight is begun, developed and eventually stopped via projectile-launched fruit salad.

The tape resumes at normal speed with all four of them covered in food, breathless, but oddly looser and more relaxed.

In the end, they were all just … tired. Tired of arguing, fighting, tired of it all.

So they shove the table, food and all, to a corner of the room and instead sit themselves on a few cushions, wordlessly declaring a truce.

“... Uuuh, how’s things with your team?” tentatively asks Deku, pulling a grape out from the jungle-like depths of his hair and shrugging before eating it.

“It was… rough,” Kingpin answers, while both Bakugous suddenly look infinitely bored and angry at being forced to be bored. “It took a while to clear things out about everything– especially the whole “Bondo incident”” sighs Kingpin.

“That was... “ says Bakugou, frowning deeply. “I’d never seen Shitty Hair– Kirishima– Tank– whatever his fucking villain name is *that* angry. What the fuck was up with that?”

“Yeah, that was actually kind of scary,” agrees Deku, looking concerned at Kingpin. “They seem to act as if it was real.”

"For us, it *was* . We were all method-acting to such a degree that we... sometimes forgot we were heroes-in-training."

Kingpin misses the way all of their eyes widen, their eyebrows climbing up to their hairlines.

"You weren't there for most of the meetings, Powerhouse, but everybody else? We were tasked with not only creating a style and a personality for our villain personas, but also a story– an entire mindset to go with it. It was fun thinking of ways to get everyone into gear and say speeches we all thought of … we just never noticed how realistic it was getting.”

There's a pause as Kingpin seems to think deeply about something, his mouth moving soundlessly as his mind works and whirls.

"I mentioned creating a story for our villain selves," cryptically begins Kingpin. "It's actually a bit more complicated than that.

All of us villains were tasked with asking ourselves: what would it take for us to become villains? And then making us *actually believe those things had already happened.* And it worked. You've seen Singularity's performance, it was nothing short of legendary … "

Kingpin blinks, shaking his head and breathing deeply, muttering *ground yourself, focus,* before exhaling sharply.

"The problem is… my villain story was about me coming aware of how incompetent heroes were and driving them out of the city in order for *us* to become the city's protectors. That should have been it, but at some point, my story started *changing* . I valued what my teammates thought of me more than my original goal.

I think… I think it was because I'd never had so many people that genuinely liked me and admired me rely on me," quietly confesses Kingpin.

"So Bondo noticed that you were flagging and tried to stop you–" deduces Deku, looking wide-eyed at him. "And he didn't."

"No, he actually did, sort of," explains Kingpin. "He managed to wake me up from that mindset, which was actually the goal, not making the villains lose."

"What a fucking shitshow…" mutters Bakugou.

There's a tense silence in the room. Until–

"So you really did forget we were in the middle of an exercise."

All three of them stare at Powerhouse, who's staring with an unreadable expression at Kingpin.

Kingpin nods.

"And even when you're a villain, you were thinking of helping *others* ," spits out Powerhouse.

Kingpin nods again, but he looks uncertain of what exactly Powerhouse meant with that sentence.

“And… you were never looking down on me. You were looking *up,”* finished Powerhouse, and so many emotions flashed through his face that in the end it melted into a blank mask. He stood up abruptly from the floor, stomping all the way to the door and slamming it open with a bang, slamming it shut even harder.

Bakugou stares at the door, stares at Deku, stares at Kingpin, then punches the table and mutters “fuck, I’m out of here. What the hell.” and heads out the door as well.

“That went well,” mutters Kingpin, his shoulders slumping.

Deku silently looks at him.

Without their costumes and in their casual clothes they look exactly the same, one thoughtful, the other stressed.

And then Deku quietly says: “You were being a hero all this time.”

“In a sense,” answers Kingpin. “The worst villains are the ones who believe themselves to be the heroes of the story, because often they *have a point* .”

“So Stain–”

“Is right about there not being enough true heroes in the industry.”

“And Shigaraki–”

“Is right about the need for Hero Society to disappear.”

“And– and All for One–?”

“... he’s right about a lot of things. But most of all? Having a Symbol of Peace is useless. One point of failure and everything goes to hell.”

There’s silence.

“I need to think about it,” finally says Deku, standing up to leave the room.

However, he hesitates at the door. Glances back. “... I hope this whole mess turns out alright,” he whispers just loud enough to be heard in the room.

Then he turns around and leaves.

Kingpin is left alone.

The tape cuts out.

The footage is filmed from a high angle, but its shakiness betrays the fact a human was holding the camera.

It's dark, the only light coming from a few candles interspersed here and there. The room is by no means small, but certainly cramped with upwards of forty people sitting on the floor.

Kingpin sits alone on one end of the room in a seiza position, bags under his eyes. He cradles a candle in his hands, the flickering light turning his expression unreadable.

"Thank you," he begins, his voice even but quiet as a whisper. "For being here. I don't want to take much of your sleeping time and I don't want us to get in trouble for being out of bed either, so I'll try to keep this as brief as I can."

With a heavy sigh, he sets the candle down in front of himself. The flame finally settles enough to illuminate his face.

His gaze lifts from the flickering flame to watch the constellation of shining eyes watching him, hanging onto his every word.

"Boss?" asks Feedback quietly, his hand nervously releasing a few sparks

"That's… that's exactly it," Kingpin starts, running a hand through his messy hair. "During the War, the way I acted as a leader wasn't what it should have been."

"After I 'killed' Powerhouse, I realized I wasn't in the right state of mind to continue leading all of you," he confesses, his hands tightening on his knees. "I was too distracted trying to distinguish what was going too far while also trying to match the heroes to think rationally."

He lets the confession hang in the dark, before calling: "Condense."

He doesn't show any kind of reaction to being addressed. He simply sits, towering above most of his classmates, a white monolith in the middle of a sea of candle-lit students.

“You were tasked with replacing your counterpart and infiltrating the heroes, yet you killed me despite us being in the same team,” Kingpin recites, while the rest of the play-pretend villains hold their breaths.

Condense’s metallic mouth gives the barest of twitches to show his dread.

“And for that I thank you.”

Shouts of confusion, comments, complaints make their way through the crowd of students, but Kingpin holds up a hand and they all calm down in a matter of seconds.

“You made me realize something I hadn’t thought of,” states Kingpin, smiling sadly at Condense. “

“Think about it,” he says, gesturing to everyone there. “There’s only one person taking the true decisions, one person knowing *everything*, one person holding the title of ‘boss’. Don’t tell me this ‘one person at the top’ situation doesn’t sound familiar.”

“It... sounds like the current hero system,” points out Singularity, his voice inflectionless.

“Or All for One’s command structure,” points out Forgery.

“Exactly! I was placed up on top and when I realized I was struggling, the only way I thought I wouldn’t let any of you down was to suck it up and keep going, Plus Ultra style.

I was wrong. I was very, very wrong,” Kingpin admits, taking a deep breath and bowing so low his head touches the ground. “And that’s why I’m stepping down as your Boss.”

“WHAT?!?”

“But then who’s gonna lead?”

“That’s the thing,” he says, fidgeting with the hem of his shirt. “I still don’t know how the Hero Class Villains will work without me at the top, but that’s exactly why I did this. I want all of us to figure it out *together*. To be able to depend on *each other* and have no single point of failure. To keep each other sane.”

“Be the change you want to see in the world?” asks, Temperance, his tail swishing behind him.

“Yeah,” answers Kingpin, smiling softly earnestly.

“I think we should all think about it,” gravely proclaims Condense. “On our own.”

“That was the point,” explains Kingpin. “In the War I trusted Con Man to think for me and all of you trusted I would think for you. We can’t have that happening again–“

“Fuck– Aizawa’s coming to check up on us!” whisper-yells Pirate Radio, one of her earphone jacks coming unstuck from the wall. “Scatter!”

And with breathless exhilaration, everybody runs in different directions, including the person filming.

Mineta watches his loss once again and again and again. Aizawa walks up to him. “So … You finally get how easy it is to lose with your mindset?” he asks.

“...Yeah,” answers Mineta, trembling as he mutters about how ‘uncool’ he looked.

“You gonna learn your lesson?”

“I’ll do my best and beyond,” he promises, tearfully, throwing himself at Aizawa’s feet.

“... That’s all I ask.” Aizawa walks away as Mineta keeps watching.

The footage is shaky, vertical, off-center. Taken secretly from a phone. From the awkward angle and the hint of cushions blocking the view, it’s clear that the device is recording while stuck behind the cushions of a couch’s back.

“–WHAT DO YOU MEAN WE’RE GOING TO FORGET EVERYTHING?!?”

"It's unfortunately true," chirps Nedzu with a cheerful grin, calmly announcing while he stands on a table in the middle of the UA dorms common room. "That is the nature of the Alternate Universe quirk. The foreigners to this universe will return home with their memories of their time here. Yet, *this* universe will reset and continue as if nothing had happened.”

“WHAAAAT? That’s so lame!” complains Ashido, stomping her foot on the ground comically. “I wanna remember the cool costume Drug-runner had!”

“It’s fucking stupid!” Pony shouted, causing others of 1-B to yell at Neito and Awase.

“My– my relationship with Deku,” mumbles Uraraka, before she starts bawling on the floor. Soon after Izuku himself joins her. Mei joins them because all the beautiful babies she saw and made will vanish. The girls join because Mineta’s lesson would be reset. Shinso joins because he wouldn't remember being an awesome hero and all the tears raise the water level of the room.

“The course of action is clear, isn’t it?” drawls Aizawa, face stony and back in a slouch. “Cancel classes.”

“Ehhh?” choruses the entirety of the UA students and even a few of the teachers.

“...I thought all of you were more logical than this,” he shoots back, looking tired of everything and everyone. “If we people from this universe are going to forget everything, then what is the point of continuing classes if we’re just going to forget them afterwards?”

“But what will we do in the meantime?” asks Iida with a worried chop of his arm.

“Figure it out yourselves,” he grumbles, pulls his sleeping bag out of nowhere and curls up in the middle of the common room.

“SLUMBER PARTY!” screeches Hagakure, before she’s pelted in the face with a pillow.

“Hell no!” shoots back Tokage pulling a face. “We just spent a few *hellish* days rooming together in the UA War, screw everybody I’m sleeping in my room!”

“Movie marathon then!” she amends, jumping up and down in place.

“...that works,” Tokage acquiesce, while excited whispers bloom around her classmates.

“Nevertheless, *we* will still remember everything!” loudly announced Crusade, chopping the air with a serious expression, light glinting off his glasses. “It would be imperative we continue with our own

education!”

“No faaaaaaaair,” whines Feedback around the charger cable in his mouth. “I don’t wanna spend tomorrow in classes while my other self has fun!”

The audio crackles as people begin to shout at each other, arguing back and forth against what they should do.

And then as one, everybody sinks into silence.

“...Midoriya, why are you on the table?” politely asks a confused Yaoyorozu.

“Well, I, uhm,” he glances at somebody outside of the frame, takes a deep breath and talks. “I think… I think our other selves deserve a break too.”

Surprise runs through the crowd.

“I– I mean! It’s that… we’ve gone through a lot in the UA War, haven’t we? We really need the time to just rest and try to deal with… everything,” he says, scratching the back of his head. “Plus Ultra is well and good, but… there are things we shouldn’t have to power through.”

On the corner of the frame, Kingpin’s face shifts from disbelief to understanding to a mix of relief and pride. Midoriya sends a small smile his way.

“Well, you heard him!” cheers Drug-runner, punching the air with a smile. “WHO WANTS TO SEE THE ALIEN MOVIES!?!”

Cheers rise so loud the audio crackles.

The footage this time doesn’t look to be clandestine. People smile and wave at the person holding the camera, or simply glancing at it and moving on.

Everyone around the room is smiling or at least trying to smile, putting on brave faces as they chatted with their counterparts, watching movies with chips and soda … with Mei and Hacker’s hands tied up so they didn’t spike anything like last time.

The villains ended up in a tangled pile of cuddles, the hero group slowly but surely starting to resemble the villains as the day wore on

and the line between the hero and villain sides of the room slowly but surely blurs.

Jiro approached Kaminari and the camera focused on them. “Um … listen, I like you, a lot. I didn’t want to bring it up because of the awkwardness with the Bakusquad … but yeah.”

“Oh my god … another girl likes me!” he shouted to the others with a blinding smile, who gave him thumbs up. “And don’t worry, if you want you can join.”

“We have great hours and a Bakugou survival plan,” joked Sero before he got hit on the head.

“Thank god, another girl! I swear all this testosterone was gonna be the end of me,” Ashido sighed in relief, lifting her hand for Jirou to high-five, which she did with her earphone jacks.

She smiled, grabbing Kaminari collar and dragging him to the door. “Um, Jiro, you ok?”

“If everyone’s gonna forget everything anyway then I may as well do things to you that makes what happened to Yuga in the mechapocalypse look safe,” Kaminari’s eyes widened, somehow blushing *and* blanching as they left the room. No one was brave enough to follow.

“Shinsou! What are you drinking?”

The camera turned to follow an intensely staring Hacker, her cross-hair pupils spinning to get a better look at his mug.

“Coffee,” he responded blankly, as Shinsou pours himself tar-black coffee and sips it despite it being practically boiling.

“What brand?” Mei asks, snatching the cup out of his hands and sniffing it, making a face.

“Hajikina.”

The entirety of the room freezes.

“Aizawa uses Jinta, the strongest coffee made WITHOUT a quirk,” Momo speaks, rapidly paling.

“And he takes it with three scoops of sugar and creamer …” Sato speaks in horror.

“You drink stronger coffee than Aizawa with no sugar or anything … how is your heartbeat stable!?” Shoji asks, shifting one of his tentacles into an ear to check his heart rate.

“... So?” Shinsou asks in confusion and then shrugs as he drinks the entire cup in one chug as easily as if it was full of water.

“What… the fuck?” Kendo suddenly asks, stunned.

The camera turns to Monoma and the *very obvious* kiss mark on his cheek, the same neon blue of Hagakure’s lipstick.

“Uuuuh, bye!” suddenly says Hagakure just runs.

“... After her!” Ashido shouted as they ran after the girl for information.

“Why am I filming this? This is useless,” mumbles the one behind the camera, before the video ends.

Play all files?

Yes No

They sigh instead of pressing “yes” for the umpteenth time. They have been holed up in the bathroom, playing the files over and over and over again, ignoring the fact that both sets of students and teachers are busy helping clean up the movie marathon and getting ready for the moment they’ll be transported back to their own dimension.

If they take too much time thinking about this, they’d be missed and they couldn’t raise suspicion. They sigh again and look at the “yes no” prompt on their cell phone. The files were a goldmine, something All for One would be extremely pleased to have in his possession.

And yet they found themselves hesitant.

It made no sense. They had a mission to fulfill; the only reason they were in UA in the first place. Not carrying it through would put everything they’ve built in danger. And yet…

Before they could regret it, they slipped the memory card out of the phone, let it fall against the water of a nearby toilet with a soft *plink!* and with one swift move, they flushed their mission down the toilet.

And after they washed and dried their shaking hands, they left behind the proof of their betrayals to both heroes and villains.

Chapter End Notes

Well! This is the end, it's been a nice long ride with all of you!

It's been quite the experience, writing the fanfic of a fanfic, and Hazard and I (Crystalquill) thank Rogue very much for helping us along the way!!! What he revealed to us of the next events in the series was invaluable!

Thank all of you for reading this absolute tornado of a literary work!!! I had so much fun!

As a last little disclaimer! This is a fanfic of Hero Class Civil Warfare and as such the events in this story are not canonical in any way, despite the amazing privilege on being in the Hero Class Villain AU collection.

Also, here's my Discord server where we can all chat and be friends! https://discord.gg/P5TRZxn

And that is all folks!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!